3 1761 04014 8983

Presented to
The Library
of the
University of Toronto
by
THE ESTATE OF THE LATE
EFFIE M.K. GLASS

T. A. Sloss
Toronto

THE CHERRY RIBBAND

THE CHERRY RIBBAND

THE CHERRY RIBBAND

BY

S. R. CROCKETT

AUTHOR OF
"ROSE OF THE WILDERNESS," "PRINCESS PENNILESS," ETC.

TORONTO: HENRY FROWDE
LONDON: HODDER & STOUGHTON

PR
4518
C3C5

Richard Clay & Sons, Limited,
Bread Street Hill, E.C., and
Bungay, Suffolk.

LIBRARY
SEP 14 1962
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

309535

CONTENTS

CHAP. PAGE

I. CHERRY RIPE, CHERRY RIPE, IN THE SPRING-TIME OF THE YEAR 9

II. THE LARGER CATECHISM 15

III. QUIET GIL 21

IV. RAITH'S OUTCASTING 27

V. HIS MOTHER'S KEEPSAKE 31

VI. SERGEANT GRIF TAKES SWORD EXERCISE . 34

VII. THE ENLISTMENT OF A RENEGADE . . 38

VIII. SABBATH SILENCES 41

IX. LAG'S CLERK SAYS 'AMEN' 48

X. THE PALETTE OF PETER PAUL . . . 52

XI. THE TRAVELLERS HAD AN ADVENTURE OR TWO BY THE WAY 57

XII. GRIF TAKES COMMAND OF THE BASS . 64

XIII. THE NEW STOCK 67

XIV. THE KISS OF PEACE 71

XV. 'LIKE AS A BIRD' 75

XVI. GEORGE JEX'S JUST PROVIDENCE . . 83

XVII. THE COT IN CANTIE BAY 89

XVIII. IVIE CASTS THE GOLD FROM HER HAIR . 94

XIX. DRUM-TAPS AND THE PRIDE OF LIFE . . 99

XX. PRAYERFUL PETER AND LONG-BODIED JOHN 105

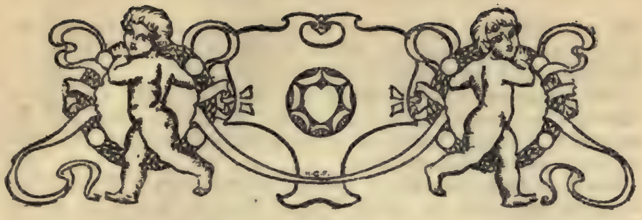
XXI. O THOU DECEITFUL TONGUE! . . . 109

XXII. DUKE JAMES AMUSES HIMSELF . . . 114

XXIII. THE MUTINY UPON THE BASS . . . 124

XXIV. THE DEIL'S BACK-KITCHEN 132

CHAP. PAGE
XXV. IN TANTALLON CAVE 139
XXVI. THE CUP AND THE LIP 148
XXVII. THE SILVER-HILTED SWORD 155
XXVIII. COUNTERPLOT 160
XXIX. GRIF RYSLAND'S SWORD KNOT 164
XXX. PRISON BREAKING 168
XXXI. H.M.S. *SWIFTSURE* IN THE BAY . . . 175
XXXII. CAPTAIN GEORGE TEDDIMAN'S INSPECTION OF THE BASS 182
XXXIII. GOOD-BYE TO THE BASS 193
XXXIV. THE LETTER ON THE ROSE-BUSH . . . 197
XXXV. LAG'S RAID 204
XXXVI. HOUSTON-IN-THE-HOLLOW 210
XXXVII. THE DUEL IN THE HALL 215
XXXVIII. IVIE'S HAND IS KISSED 224
XXXIX. LAG TAKES COUNSEL 232
XL. KINGSBERRY-ON-THE-HILL 237
XLI. THE HAUNTED HAGS OF CRAIG WEARY . 244
XLII. AN HIGH HILL AS THE HILL OF BASHAN . 250
XLIII. THE WILES OF PRAYERFUL PETER . . 257
XLIV. THE FIGHT IN THE MIST 262
XLV. THE WAMPHRAY CHIEL 269
XLVI. THE HOUSE OF WITCHCRAFT 277
XLVII. 'OUT OF THE DEPTHS I CRIED' . . . 285
XLVIII. LONG-BODIED JOHN—MARTYR 293
XLIX. BIG DEIL AND LITTLE DEIL 300
L. MARJORY'S MOTHER-HEART 305
LI. THE PLACE OF SLAUGHTER 309
LII. JEZEBEL AND JEZEBEL'S CHILDREN . . 314



THE CHERRY RIBBAND

CHAPTER ONE

CHERRY RIPE, CHERRY RIPE, IN THE SPRING-TIME OF THE YEAR

RAITH ELLISON had not come straight home from the Conventicle. There was nothing remarkable in that. It was no time to walk calmly back from a proscribed hill communion, where the Gospel was preached by outlaw ministers at the peril of their lives, as if it had been a cock-fighting or tavern merrymaking.

His blind father, old William Ellison, had already been led homeward by Gil, his eldest son—the pair of them passing rapidly athwart the brown heather and dark purple gashes of the moss-hags. Murdoch and Beattie, his younger brothers, had held away to the north, with Raith's mother and sister Euphrain under their protection. That was all the family of the house of Mayfield, save only the dogs and Grizel Alston, the herd's lassie from the Muir of Fintrie, who helped Euphrain with the byre.

Raith Ellison had tried hard to be as enthusiastic about religion as were his father and brothers. But in the first place he took somewhat after his mother, whose East-country blood responded somewhat slackly to the high westland ardours. Moreover Raith was but nineteen and, though he was little better than a young ploughman, he had never, at kirk or market, looked kindly at a girl without having her look kindly back at him. Farther than that it had not gone.

So, for these reasons, very clear to his own mind, Raith Ellison had come home from the great conventicle upon the

Hill of Tarbellion, by way of the village of Irongray and the great house of Kersland, where Cornet Grahame's troop of His Majesty's dragoons was stationed.

The sergeant-major's daughter, Ivie Rysland, wore pink ribbons and laughed at him. But, as Raith carefully explained to himself, when his conscience pricked him, *that* had nothing to do with the case.

How, in fact, should it? Raith did not care. He was his father's son, and he knew better than to mix with unbelievers, open persecutors, Jezebels—especially Jezebels. Yet, for all that, it was wonderful how memorable Raith Ellison found the way the Rysland girl had of throwing her head back and laughing aloud when he passed by. In it there was a trill that rang a bell somewhere deep down in his breast, and then the flash of those white teeth—which had no business to be so small and white and regular! There was no word of these when, in the Book of the Kings, she painted her face and tired her hair and looked out at the window.

Raith Ellison did not want to see Ivie Rysland, the sergeant's daughter. The words of the sermon delivered on the Mount Tarbellion were yet ringing in his ears. "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion."

Desperately Raith tried to fix his mind upon the divisions of Mr. Peden's discourse—from its stately beginning to its startling and prophetic conclusion—the Father clothing the Son with all royal and divine prerogatives, owning him before the assembled heavens and the wonderful earth, and last of all, bestowing upon him an earthly throne and the power to judge the nations—especially this poor afflicted Scotland—and to do judgments upon its malignant and blaspheming oppressors.

Raith passed through the village, his head down, scarce glancing at the shut doors, the veiled windows upon which the blinds were drawn down for precaution. Most of the villagers had been, one way or other, at the Communion and preaching on Tarbellion Hill, "in the place called Eshcol, because there was the wine poured out." But Lag's Tower was somewhat too close at their doors, and the folk of Irongray knew that they played with fire who took liberties with the King's laws within arms' length of Sir Robert Grier.

Raith told himself that he was glad when he had passed down the length of Irongray Village, with never a glance of a cherry-coloured ribbon from one end of the street to the other.

But when, at the green dip of the road to Kersland House, where was the headquarters of Cornet Grahame's troop, a laughing voice flouted him in full song, there was, spite of the recent solemnity and the awful words of him whom all men counted a prophet, a sudden leap of gladness in the heart of Raith Ellison, who, in that sombre Cameronian household of Mayfield hidden like a whaup's nest in the bosom of the purple hills, had held through all his more youthful youth no promiscuous troking with womankind.

Especially had he been warned against the women of the Oppressor, who, as his blind father had so often informed him (on the highest Scriptural authority), "painted their eyes, decked themselves with ornaments, sitting by the wayside;" or who like the Sabaens from the wilderness (by which was undoubtedly meant the uncovenanted English), put "bracelets upon their hands and beautiful crowns of gold upon their heads."

Now this is what came to Raith Ellison out of the wood:

"Sweet Willie said a word in haste,
Fair Annie took it ill.
Oh, I'll never wed a tocherless May
Again my faither's will."

Then yet more joyously, from the green covert rang out the reply of Fair Annie to such ungallant sentiments, the last two lines being delivered with a perfect peal of scornful laughter:

"If ye will never wed a wife,
A wife will ne'er wed ye.
Sae he is off to tell his mither,
As fast as he could flee!"

Raith looked at the dense covert of leaves, where the hazel bushes grew close down to the track, sweeping the green foot-road on either side of the hard-trodden bridle-path with a pleasant sough as often as the wind blew. But the prospect did not tell Raith Ellison much. His heart halted, indeed, like a horse suddenly checked, and then plunged determinedly forward. The green leaves moved above the path. They waved. They were put aside.

And there she was—she whom the old man his father had called Jezebel. There was a crown of gold on her head. Bracelets of the same twined her wrists. But the lips were so rose-red, the teeth so marvellously small and white and regular, and the laughter in the eyes—dark eyes, the colour undecided—so disconcerting that it was some time before

Raith Ellison could make out that the golden crown and the wristlets were only fabricated of the gay lightness of broom-blossom culled upon the Irongray knowes.

And then her eyes sparkled with a clear fire in their deeps, like sunbeams flickering and flittering through leaves into a woodland well.

> "Hame to my minnie—hame to my minnie!
> 'And the best place for me,' said bonnie Willie."

She stepped out into the road, the sergeant's daughter, Ivie Rysland. Not a tall girl nor yet a short girl. Not a thin girl nor yet a plump girl. But just such a girl as Raith Ellison had never seen—nor to tell the truth was likely to see from the Back Shore of Port Patrick to the Brig End of Dumfries.

Ah, if she had not been—he remembered the words, they were his father's—"a daughter of the uncircumcised!" So thought Raith, without reflecting that, never in his life had he taken the least interest in the doucest lambs of the flock, clad in grey always, and with a checked plaid over their heads on Sabbaths, their eyes cast down and their snooded hair plain and smooth as comb could make it.

There was no end to the daring of this girl, this Ismaelitish woman. She stood in front of him, her bracelets upon her wrists, chapleted with flame, the light wind blowing her hair, sensibly and elfishly casting her enchantments upon Raith Ellison. She mimicked his attitudes; thrusting forward her head, enlarging her eyes, and dropping her chin. Then all suddenly she cried, "Sweet Willie, have *ye* a tongue? *I* have—see!"

And without any tincture of that sober respect which Raith Ellison knew had been put at the first between the woman and the man, she thrust out at him a little pink pin-point of tongue.

Raith stood aghast. In all his body, in all his soul he had no word. Decidedly, very decidedly she must be Jezebel. Yet her face was not painted, nor yet her eyelashes—Raith wished that he had been somewhat nearer to her so that he could make sure.

Then taking a new tack, she suddenly affrayed him by a question.

"And what, I pray you of your courtesy, kind sir, was Auld Sandy's text this day upon the Hill of Tarbellion?"

That touched him, and he spoke.

"I ken not," he said slowly, and blushing deeply, "I ken not the thing that ye would have of me——"

"Sir," she flouted, "ye are safe for me. I was ever considerate to bairns. Why, I would not have your poor heart at a gift, lad. No, not though the passage were as easy as the crossing of Bothwell Brig. Rest assured—I am as free of guile as any ewe-lamb of the fold!"

And she struck her hands together in a pretty mockery of what in the troop was considered the Hill-folks' way of preaching.

"But—you said—you said," Raith Ellison panted, a little huskily.

"What?" she demanded. "In the course of a day I say many things—more than there is any call to remember! But I am a true maid—out with what I said, sirrah, and I will stand by it—body o' me, that will I!"

"You asked Mr. Peden's text this day, when he preached upon the Hill Tarbellion!" murmured the young man.

Raith looked about him fearfully as he spoke. The heats of the Killing Time in Scotland were no encouragers of loud or vain speech.

Yet Ivie laughed, laughed till the tears came into her eyes and the lemon-coloured globes scattered wastefully from her golden crown.

"Great oaf," she said, yet putting something in her voice that took the sting out of the injury, "great oaf, do you think that Sergeant-Major Grif Rysland of His Majesty's dragoons cannot do his duty without his daughter's assistance? I am no spy, man. Look at me!"

She took a step or two nearer to him, paused eye to eye, daring him, set her little hands with the yellow bracelets upon her hips, the broom petals starring the flounces of her close-girt dress.

"Do I look like a spy?" she said, "answer me, holy Mr. Raith Ellison—conventicle-keeping young Mr. Ellison—good, sweet, law-breaking, gospel-hearing, evil-thinking Mr. Raith Ellison, do I look like a spy? Have I sold the blood of man or woman? Set the troopers on the track of any that are brave, misguided man? I demand you to speak if ever ye have heard the like of me? What? Silent—still silent?"

She waved her hand contemptuously.

"Enough!" she cried. "I bid you a good day, baby-face—baby-heart! Yonder lies your road. Doubtless your courage will grow—with your moustaches. For, let me tell you, Mr. Raith Ellison, ye are neither jolly Kingsman, nor stout Whig. Go keep the cows, laddie! Tarry at Jericho until thy beard be grown, as Sandy would say!"

And she sprang into the woodland with a scornful flout of her hand, and the rapid swirling of broad green leaves closing about her like water.

Raith looked at the place from which she had come and into which she had disappeared. He had half a mind to follow her. But a mocking voice, like an echo half-choked with laughter, halted him.

> "Hame to his minnie—hame to his minnie!
> And the best place for him, bonnie lad Willie!"

Raith Ellison bit his lip till he felt a sweet taste in his mouth. He started fiercely for the broad green wall of the hazel bushes. He would seize her, hold her, rend an explanation from her. What right had she——?

But before he had solved the first of these questions, there came once more the ripple of that light laugh which had so often made him quiver. A golden wristlet fell at his feet. And after that there was no more of human sound. The sough of the wind on the great empty bank-side of trees and in the dense covert of the hazel bushes came back to him exceedingly lonesome.

Raith stood long before he dared to pick up the yellow circle in the dust. It was tied with the smallest possible little bow of cherry-coloured ribbon, very dainty. He walked on hastily, and as he went he hid Jezebel's keepsake first under his cloak, and then deeper, under the sober grey *justicor*, or waistcoat, near the place where his Presbyterian heart was beating all too unsoberly.

CHAPTER TWO

THE LARGER CATECHISM

"In my twentieth year,"—so Raith Ellison was wont to tell his age when any asked him, which was, indeed, seldom. For in these regions of an elevated piety, even so much savoured of David's sin of "numbering the people," and those who were already in the hands of the Philistines scrupled to fall also under the hand of God.

Fourteen years younger than the next of his brethren, four years younger than his sister Euphrain, the youngest born of the house of Mayfield had grown up as a tender plant in a rude and blusterous world. Slender of body, tall, or inclined to be so (for the lad had hardly yet done with his growing) his ruddy lips and modestly blushing cheek caused him to be called the young David—"save in this," added his father when he heard it, "that I fear me he lacketh sadly of David's grace."

"Hoot, guidman," the boy's mother would answer, with her loving indulgent look, "'tis but the short corn on the sandy sapless knowes that ripens early!"

"Say rather, Marjory Simpson," retorted the stern old man, "do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?"

"Deed, William Ellison, be the lad thorn or thistle, yours is the root-stock—a slip of your grafting, William. Deny him not. It behooves you to stand between the lad and his Maker!"

"Then woe is me, and woe to the lad," said the father, "for I am but a corrupt tree and can only bring forth evil fruit!"

"I see naething the matter wi' the bairn, William," persisted his mother, "you are forever on his back, you and Beattie. He was at the Communion Stanes this day and behaved right reverently, sitting apart with his eyes on Maister Peden, though yet over young to be a communicant."

"*I* was admitted when I was but fifteen years of my age," said her husband, "and Beattie——"

Mistress Marjory Ellison stamped her foot lightly.

"Speak not to me of Beattie," she said, "he is forever carrying tales."

"Out of your own mouth I condemn you, woman," cried the blind man, "is Beattie not bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh even as the other?"

"Even so! He is your son and mine," returned the old lady, "the Lord save his soul and bridle his tongue!"

"He hath been set apart to speak the truth of God to a faithless generation," said the farmer of Mayfield proudly. "Would that I could but see him. I would barter a hundred years of glory, that these eyes might behold him but once, standing on the barren mountains with a willing people about him, dividing asunder soul and marrow with the sharp two-edged sword of the gospel!"

"That were indeed a miracle!" said his wife dryly.

"I dare you to say so, woman, of your own son," cried William Ellison, rising to his feet, his tall form dilating, as he felt for the corner of the high chimney shelf upon which he was accustomed to steady himself. His wife mechanically guided his hand to the place and then replied, nothing abashed, "William, the miracle would be, if, even for the space of an hour, that your sight should return to you!"

But the old man waved a hand unsmilingly. He knew better. He saw with an inward eye.

"Even as Isaac," he said grimly, "my eyesight hath departed from me, and also I have a wife who (even as Rebecca the daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore unto him), goeth about to alter birthrights and to drive her youngest son forth into the deserts of vanity and the pride of man."

Then it was that Raith Ellison arrived. He had come over the moor, skulking from thorn bush to thorn bush, as it had been guiltily. Yet not because of Lag's questing scouts, nor yet of any troop of red dragoons riding hither and thither over the heather. It was the thing he carried near his heart that made him shamed—the circlet of dark green from which most of the brave yellow flourish had been crushed, yet which he could still see shining upon her arm as gold shines upon alabaster.

Gil, his eldest brother, greeted him from the stable-door with a smile—old, quiet Gil Ellison who spoke but seldom, yet who had done his duty at Drumclog and the Moss of Ayr, besides being one of the last to break upon the fatal Bridgend of Bothwell. Gil never said very much at any time. He left vain talking to others. But all knew that no man's hands were readier in time of need. And as for Raith, Gil was far more his father than the stern old blind man within. Raith knew instinctively that, come what might, he had a friend in quiet Gil, even as he was conscious that most of his misfortunes came to him through the agency of cunning Beattie, who, mild and of speech most plausible, but with keen shifty eyes, cultivated and practised a habit of talebearing "for the good of Raith's soul," and ofttimes too in the past, for the penance of his body.

Raith, conscious of his late entrance, carefully evaded the house-place and the sound of the voices within. He left cunning Beattie watching him from the hillside on which the sheep were scattered, and, making a turn behind the house, he went towards the dairy where he knew his sister Euphrain would be setting the pails for the night. In the byre he heard huge-boned Murdoch the good-natured, clashing the milking luggies and slapping the cows to make them stand over, all to the accompaniment of chains that rattled, and cloven feet that moved restlessly among the slippery "sharn" of the byre.

"Euphrain," he said, as he stood at the door, "so all have gotten home in safety?"

Euphrain, a pale girl, still and staid in her ways, like Gil her brother, glanced up quickly from her "bynes," or great wooden basins of reaming milk. She was making ready for the morrow's cheese-making.

"That I kenna," she said, softly, "what think ye, Raith?"

And there was something so personal in her inquiry that Raith, though sure in his heart that she could know nothing, was unable to restrain himself from blushing. "There are our father and mother," he began. "I heard them in the kitchen-place. And Beattie, yonder he is on the hill. Gil is at the stable door, and I saw Murdoch——"

"And yourself, Raith?" she said, pausing to regard him stilly, "is it well with you, boy? There is a difference in you these last days, which all may see—you draw yourself away from us. The others notice it. Tell me—I can help. Or tell our mother. She will listen. Have ye denied the Word of Life? Have ye companied with the doers of iniquity? Speak, Raith, for the love we bear you. But why should I speak of that? You love us no more. We are too simple for you!"

Raith was silent a moment. He was even, as it seemed to himself, on the brink of a confession. But something choked him—the foolishness of it, the futility of having nothing to confess, save nonsense, about pink ribbons and sprigs of broom.

"Euphrain," he said, but without looking her in the face, "there is nothing to tell."

She stood erect, gazing deeply in her young brother's eyes. Then she turned away with a sigh.

"Shut," she said, "shut to me now! But it had been better, Raith, to tell your Euphrain, lest a worse thing befall us all!"

But Raith Ellison, shy as a wild goat, proud at heart as a young horse that has never felt the rein, came near only to his mother. He could answer only her questions, he thought—not Euphrain's. At this moment great Murdoch, the good-natured giant, approached with two full pails, stumbling on the step at sight of his youngest brother in the dairy.

"Eh, you," he muttered, "get out o' the road o' working folk, man."

But nothing that Murdoch could say hurt any one at Mayfield. He was only Murdoch, and it seemed but a day since he had been used to carry the younglings on his back, both at one time. He could have done as much now, only that Euphrain had suddenly grown staid and Raith proud. Nevertheless, no one was ever out of temper with Murdoch. Even Beattie's venomed speeches dropped away harmless and blunted from Murdoch's armour of proof.

"Stupidity!" quoth Beattie, between his teeth, "he does not even know when I pink him!"

"As well, perhaps, for you, Master Beattie," put in quiet old Gil from his corner, "why he could plaster the rigging with the contents of your clever brain-pan!"

A kind of dour despair, and desperate aloofness from all his kin, took possession of Raith Ellison as he went into the kitchen to face his father and to underlie the questioning reproachful glances of his mother. But the blind old man was the more to be feared. His ear, answering for eyes also, had fined down all shades and differences of tone till he read them as a clerk an open book. He had the inner vision of much experience. But his infirmity kept from him the kindly milk of tolerance, which mostly accompanies insight among the old. Also the times were against broad views.

Raith did not speak as he entered. He looked at his mother shyly and, averting his eyes, he went to the great byne of skimmed milk and whey which stood always on the corner of the white scoured wooden dresser. He lifted the brimming scoop thrice to his lips and drank deep.

"Ye are late," said his father, speaking as from a great height. He was standing with one strong hand gripping the chimney corner, as was his wont. His fingers had made a groove there during the years. His eyes were on his son —grey veiled eyes, startlingly piercing and, as it seemed, clairvoyant. There was no horror of whiteness about them as about those of so many blind.

"Aye," said Raith, striving for calm, "I came by the way of the village."

"Sir," said his father, "was not the moor clear and open before you? Wherefore then have ye walked in the way of sinners?"

"Because it was good not to return from the preaching save two or three together," said Raith, somewhat sullenly. "It was at your own bidding."

"So your young limbs are slower than those of an old man and a blind," his father went on. "Two hours already have your mother and I been sitting under our own vine and figtree, waiting for our youngest born, your mother's Benjamin. And now, sir, what have you to say?"

"Nothing," said Raith Ellison, with a kind of angry calmness, "I have nothing to tell. Of the soldiers I saw none. And in the village street not a cat stirred. The blinds were drawn down. I saw naught but Peter Porson, the Angry Curate, who hammered a printed paper on the kirk door and cursed every time he chacked his finger with the hammer!"

So told, there seemed not much wrong that Raith had done. But an Ellison, a dweller in the house of Mayfield, of the bluest blood of Reformation and Covenants ever since old Makkar Ellison (who had begun by ballad making and ended by psalm singing) laid his hackbut over his shoulder and set off to Maybole to stand behind John Knox in his disputation with the Abbot of Crossraguel—an Ellison must be as far above suspicion as the wife of Cæsar.

"And these hours, lad?" persisted his father. "Beattie made it two hours by the sun from the time ye entered Kersland wood at the Irongray smithy to the time when ye came up the loaning from the Lochside."

"Beattie!" exclaimed the boy fiercely, "it is always Beattie—he spies on me and carries tales!"

"For your soul's good—he has it much at heart," said his father. "Beattie is a choice vessel, set apart for lofty duty."

Here the Mistress of Mayfield coughed, and going to the dresser began to clatter dishes. The old man, quick to interpret, turned on her. "The Lord hath still some sore strivings with you, Marjory Simpson. He hath not yet mastered that stubborn Eastland heart of thine. Ye are kin to them that refused a shelter to the poor flying folk on the night of Pentland. But see ye that the softening comes in time into your horny heart. For He will not always strive. If ye support this your youngest-born in his folly, and rattle your crocks at the name of Beattie who is as one chosen of God, set apart and anointed among us—I tell ye, woman, ye are working the works of the devil in this covenanted house."

"I see not that the lad Raith hath done so mickle wrong," said his wife, "were ye never young yoursel', William? I think that I mind a time when ye thought other and better of my poor horny Eastland heart. But let that gang by, laddie, sit ye down to your supper. Ye have need of it, I trow. Listening to the preached word on the moors is hungry work to the young!"

"It should not be so to the profitably inclined—" said old Ellison, "wine on the lees well refined, the dinner of herbs where love is, the finest of the wheat—all these were sweet on my palate to-day! I feel no need of earthly meat."

"The better for you," said his wife firmly, "but mind the fire of coals, and the fish laid thereon by the side of the Lake!"

"And One that stood thereby and said, 'Come and dine!'" murmured the old man exaltedly with an entire change of voice, making as if to lift his bonnet from his head. "Ye are right, Marjory Simpson, I stand reproved before you. Give the lad his supper!"

CHAPTER THREE

QUIET GIL

THE farm of Mayfield lay in a little howe of the wide, barrow-backed moors, well hidden from all the more open ways of traffic. It had often been visited, both by dragoons and the rougher levies of Lag. But nothing had ever been proved against the Ellisons. Some strain of blood kin, and a lifetime of respect mingled with awe for blind William Ellison, had for the time being stopped the mouth of that rough-pelted lion, Robert Grier.

It was a thatched farmhouse in one corner—a story beneath and a garret above, a quadrangle of rough-faced office-houses, kept carefully pointed with lime, and loop-holed on the outer sides as if for musketry fire, a huge striding gateway of wood barred across the top and gunshot proof—the whole the work of William Ellison and his father in the old high days of Presbytery after the year Thirty Eight, when there was news of the descent of Montrose's Highlanders and Fear walked the land. For Mayfield was an ancient freehold and went down from Ellison to Ellison, no superior or liege-lord having a claim upon it, ever since the great house of the Douglases of the Black was put down in blood and treachery by King Jamie of the Fiery Face.

A bien place this home-steading of Mayfield. Calls had been made upon it time and again—fodder, victual, bestial had been carried away. Yet the barns were gorged, the kitchen was a-swing with the hams of mutton and sides of pork, while in the family beef-tub, there was put to salt each backend, the full-fed Martinmas bullock for the provend of the winter.

Moreover, the Ellisons had the open hand. No stinting—no scanting. None turned away hungry from the door—not even the Egyptian fly-by-nights who dwelt in the lirks of the hills and sallied forth only to steal and to reive and to devour.

Especially the wanderer for conscience sake had a welcome, warm and heartsome at Mayfield, for none knew how soon every member of the household might be driven out on the hillside for the honour of a wasted kirk and a broken covenant. The King's soldier, straying from his troop, sat down to the best the house could afford. He was a man, after all, and even if his hands were red as his coat, with the blood of God's chosen—well, there was this ancient and effectual excuse for him—*he knew not what he did.*

It was, however, mostly owing to the East Country blood of Marjory Simpson, spouse to blind William of Mayfield, that these things were so. She it was who, behind her husband's back, had paid the "cess," and spoken fair words to the rough soldiery on their domiciliary visitations, and (her family out of the way), had even boasted of their kinship to Lag, so that up to the present Mayfield and its indwellers had been left in peace in the midst of that wasted and nightmare-ridden country.

Quiet Gil had fought, and would doubtless fight again. But that was Gil's affair. He asked no council of any. He went to his bed in the stable loft, after suppering the horses and redding up the yard. In the morning he was not. Neither his gun, his pair of pistols, nor his short sword were to be found.

He would be absent for a period longer or shorter, as the case might be. But upon a morning, all unawares, the first to awaken (it was always Gil's mother) would look out of the narrow casement, and there, placidly taking the horses to water would be Gil, his face a little thinner perhaps, but still and placidly tolerant as ever, with the same gentle, grave far-back smile that ever characterised him.

Some day too, Beattie, who had an eye to the ministry of the Word, and began to do bravely at family worship, would doubtless take to the hills. But there were years and years which must pass before that. For good William Ellison was resolved to do all things decently and in order. Beattie was to go abroad in some ship, guided by his uncle Captain David Simpson of Leith, a notable ship's captain, who would take him up, convey him over seas, and set him down at the feet of Master Brackel at Leeuwarden in the Low Countries, even as Paul sat at the feet of Gamaliel.

As for the great Murdoch, he was a bearer of burdens and a hewer of wood. He guided the horses at the plough. His strong arms were never tired. Cutting with the reaping hook, helping Beattie on the moor with his sheep, winning the meadow-hay, thatching the office-houses, breaking the young colts, it was all one to Murdoch—good-natured always, ready with sinewy hands and long-striding legs to succour a brother or do his errand. Much put upon, but taking it all like mother's milk, there was yet a strong life to be aroused one day in Murdoch—mighty angers, indomitable wraths, which he who should kindle would do well to flee from right hastily. So at least said those who had seen him brain the Kersland horned bull, with nothing but a short plough-coulter in his hand, that day when it broke dykes and attacked his mother in the Mayfield meadow.

And Euphrain?

But Euphrain shall speak for herself. She was a Puritan maiden. Deep things were in her heart as she stooped over the milking-pails. She had Gil's quiet, strong, and even silences. But in her thoughts on duty and the affairs of the state—and specially of Christ's suffering Kirk, Euphrain Ellison was liker her father than any of the others. The main difference was that he spoke continually, while she, as a maid, fenced her heart deeper and deeper about with silence and reserve.

After eating his supper of "sowens" and skim milk, to which his mother, watching William Ellison safe into his closet, added a full farle of oat-cake and a slice of mutton ham, Raith took his broad blue bonnet in his hand and strolled out.

He drew a full, deep-chested breath at the door as he took in the clean coolness of the dusk. In front of him there was only a single star, but a young moon in its first quarter glittered overhead, sharp at the inner edge as a scythe newly straiked.

Gil was standing with his arms on the bars of the open gate, into which he had not yet closed the stock for the night. He was waiting for Beattie, who, from off the moor, was driving down the ewes with their lambs. The sweet uneasy plaintiveness of their calling came to him across the valley with an infinite tenderness.

Gil did not look at his brother. He did not move his bearded chin off his palm. Any one who did not know Gil might have thought that he was quite unconscious of Raith's presence. But Raith knew better.

"Trouble?" queried the elder, with an upward inflexion, yet hardly raising his voice above a whisper.

"Yes," assented Raith, "Beattie told our father that I was two hours in the Kersland wood on my way home."

Something came from between the clenched teeth of Gil Ellison—something like the first low warning of a watch-dog when, very far off, he diagnoses something that does not please him. More than that the growl could not be—for Gil was a good Covenant man, and had stood with their stoutest on many a stricken field.

"A lass?" said Gil, without moving, still with the same subtle twist of question in his voice.

"It was nothing—I canna tell ye!" said Raith, incoherently.

"Then—a lass!"

This time Gil's voice was a simple assertion.

"There was no wrong," said Raith, with undue solemnity, "she only laughed at me!"

Gil nodded his head.

"Ay," he said, "it begins that gate. But the road lies yont, far yont—where ye cannot see, Raith boy. Turn ye, lad—turn ye!"

"What ken ye about lasses, Gil?" said Raith, "a sober professing man like you?"

Gil touched the roughing of curled hair about his temples.

"This was not always grey," he said, quietly, "but—the Lord's will—the Lord's will be done. I am no denying that she made me a better man!"

"Who?" said Raith, bewildered. He was thinking of Ivie Rysland and wondering to distraction how this staid sober-sides of a Gil could possibly have known her.

"Who?" repeated Gil, slowly, "who?—Why, the lass that garred a young man's hair turn grey in a night!"

"In a night!" he repeated and gravely turned on his heel as if he had no further advice to offer, no reproof or comment to make. Only as he went Raith caught his muttered words,

"I deny not—no, I dare not—that she made a better man of Gil Ellison!"

It was now the time of the closing of the great gate, always a high and important event at the farm-town of Mayfield. Beattie came in after his flock, two rough-haired collies at his heels, well satisfied. He was the tallest and darkest of any of the Ellisons. He carried his head a little forward, as if continually peering about him—"looking at the wonderful works of God," he said. But it may be judged without too much uncharitableness, keeping also a shrewd eye on the sins and shortcomings of his fellow men.

Then the family of Mayfield went within doors to the evening prayer. The ingle-fire burned bright in the darkness of the gloomy besmoked kitchen. With a certain pomp the mistress of the house had placed a pair of candles in the tall brass candlesticks on the table. Between them lay the great Bible, shut within its rough covers of hairy calf-skin.

Formerly when the children were younger, it had been the custom for William Ellison himself to recite the passage for the day with the open volume before him. He knew by heart the Psalms, certain chapters in Isaiah, much of Jeremiah, the Song of Solomon word for word, parts of the first three

Gospels, all John (of course), the Romans after and including the eighth chapter, and, strangely enough (and possibly owing to the chill Eastland influence of his wife) the letter of James—Luther's "epistle of straw."

But recently it had been Beattie who read the word "in the ordinary" as it was called—that is, straight through the Bible from one end to the other. Murdoch, his one accomplishment, was wont to raise the tune in a voice wondrously sweet and melting to proceed from such a Colossus.

All were now assembled. The old man stood erect by the chimney-piece, ready to kneel at the prayer, while in his place sat the scholar and future preacher, Beattie, his finger turning over the leaves with a rustling sound to measure the length of his evening portion. There was something of prideful assumption in his manner.

The blind old man judged by the ceasing of the noise that all was ready.

"Let the doors be shut!" he said in a solemn voice, "it is the hour of the evening sacrifice!"

Obediently Euphrain glided to the outer door to close it, but started back with a quick cry of alarm from the tall dark figure, wrapped in a plaid, and with a great staff in his hand who stood motionless before it. Gil went quickly to the door, for the figure had raised a hand. But it was in the benediction of peace.

"The blessing of a sinful man be on this house and all that dwell therein!"

"Amen!" cried the blind man William Ellison, starting forward. "I hear Mr. Peden's voice. Come in—come in, sir—you find us at the evening duty."

Then came a strange man in, his long grey beard falling deep on his breast, tall far beyond the ordinary height of mankind, his hair thrown back from a broad brow, and in his eyes a strange cast—the look of the second sight, the inner vision of things unseen.

"Have ye well considered?" he said, "there are bloodhounds close in my track. I come as a thief in the night, not entering in by the door. Do ye well to hold communion with Alexander Peden?"

"The back is made for the burden," said the blind man, "all here are ready to suffer for the Way!"

The tall man with the long grey beard, whom men called Peden the Prophet, looked about him, his strange vague eyes seeming to search all the souls gathered in that Mayfield kitchen.

"Ah," he said, "I am not so sure. Methinks there is one who but dippeth his sop in the Master's dish!"

And at this William Ellison turned his sightless eyes towards his youngest son, in the place where he knew him to be sitting. As for Beattie, he looked up and marked the face of Raith burning red with shame and confusion. At which Beattie smiled. He was of those who are prepared to find the heavenly joys enhanced by a near vision of the torments of the lost. They hope the gulf fixed will not be fixed too wide.

But there was yet more and worse for Raith.

William Ellison, with lofty courtesy, invited the stranger to undertake the evening worship. But Peden the Prophet, dropping his long beard on his breast, answered only, "To-morrow, an you will. But for the first night it is my custom to let a man be high-priest in his own house, that I may know after what manner he draws aside the veil from the Holy of Holies!"

CHAPTER FOUR

RAITH'S OUTCASTING

In time of worship Raith sat beside his mother, just as he had done ever since he was a little kink-headed, petticoated boy, mumbling surreptitious crumbs under cover of her apron. Even now, after the psalm had been raised and all were singing in a sweet and solemn unison, Raith moved a little nearer to his mother and nestled against her knee, which, as instinctively, went forward to meet him—all mothers will know how. No one saw. It was their secret, but yet Marjory Simpson had been waiting for that moment all the day long. And as she turned a leaf of her psalm book, her hand went down, as it were unintentionally, and rested a moment on his neck, where the soft short curls were. To her he seemed to be a babe again.

And Raith's heart warmed to the unspoken sympathy. He did not sing any more.

Then Beattie read. It was the divine tale of the Prodigal Son, and Raith thought that the eyes of all were upon him. He would have been unhappy but for his mother's hand upon his neck. It comforted him—yet, boylike, he hoped that the others would not notice.

Indeed, none but Peden the Prophet did see, with those vague wide-set eyes, which, misty and inward, seemed to divine rather than merely to discern.

William Ellison prayed, his wife guiding him as ever to the great three-legged chair of black oak which was his Throne of Grace. His prayer followed the lines of the reading. First he pled for Scotland, the spoilt child of the Promises, long wandering shepherdless and now fallen among thieves. Again, coming nearer, he prayed for Galloway, for Irongray, trampled under foot of the Oppressor—doubtless for their own sins unconfessed and unrepented of. Lastly, and with great vehemence, he prayed for the undeclared Achans in the camp of the faithful—idolators, Baal-worshippers, raging waves of the sea foaming out their own shame, for prodigal children rioting in far countries, Judases who were ready to betray their master—on and on till Raith could have cried aloud. Not for fear, but because of something that secretly pricked him. "Thou art the man! Thou art the man!" it said.

For in his heart Raith felt himself apart from this company of worshippers—not worse than they, perhaps, but different. Even his mother's hand was removed from him now. She had to keep touch with her husband, lest in his ecstasies he should fall headlong from his knees, as he had more than once done before.

Raith groaned aloud, and Beattie, ever on the watch, opened out the fingers which he had reverently shut upon his face, and fixed him with a malignant eye.

At the close there rested a silence upon all. In honour of the guest, the two candles were permitted to burn. The heads of the house seated themselves and offered to Mr. Peden the seat of honour in the chimney corner. Euphrain, moving softly, laid some birch twigs on the hearth and upon these half-a-dozen larger faggots, which blazed up and lo! there was a clear white light throughout all the dwelling.

"Come hither!" said Mr. Peden, suddenly reaching out his hand. It was in Raith's direction that he looked.

"Saul among the prophets," he said, "what dost thou here, looking like a young David fresh from keeping the sheep?"

Beattie pushed Raith forward upon the hearthstone. The ruddy lad fronted the deep-lined weary figure of the old minister-wanderer.

"Knowest thou the Way of God?" he said, softly.

"I do not know," said Raith, hanging down his head.

"Woe is me!" cried his father aloud, "that a child of mine should have no clearer testimony!"

But the Prophet regarded him not.

"None so ill—none so ill," he said, nodding his head, "here is poor Alexander Peden, who for sixty years hath sought it with tears, and even now walketh that Way but stumblingly. But what is this?"

Something had fallen upon the hearth and lay clear as Cain's blood-mark upon the broad shining forehead of the hearthstone.

IVIE RYSLAND'S WRISTLET OF BROOM FLOURISH!

There was an awesome silence in the kitchen of Mayfield, clearly lighted by the hissing flames of the birch branches. Raith's world swung about him. Then came Beattie's clear high tenor.

"I saw the woman of sin—the sergeant's daughter, decked with the like. She tied it about with a cherry ribband and set it on her arm!"

The old serpent himself could not have spoken plainer.

"Who has brought the witch's token into this house?" cried the old man. "Take it up, Beattie."

And while his younger brother stood paralysed and impotent, Beattie lifted up the little dark green wristband, now despoiled in its close quarters of most of its gay flourish, but still indubitably tied about with the bow of cherry-coloured ribbon.

"It is the same," said Beattie. "I can swear to it. I saw the mad wench go singing and dancing across Macrimmon muir, with the like upon her head. Me she saw not, but went on her way towards the Kersland Wood."

"Where Raith stayed two hours this day," said his father, "on his way from the ordinances of Grace! Stand forth, Raith Ellison."

And obedient as he had ever been to his father's voice, Raith stood up.

"Have you seen and spoken with this woman?" demanded his father, rolling his veiled eyes upon him.

"I have seen her!" said Raith.

"This day?"

"This day!"

"The heathen woman—the woman that is a singer of songs—that flattereth with her tongue——?"

"She flattered not," cried Raith, stung by the injustice of this, "she but laughed and mocked!"

"Yet with her—the daughter of the Man of Blood, my son spent two hours, wandering in the solitary places of the wood!"

"I saw him enter and I saw him come out. It was good two hours!" said Beattie, thoughtfully.

"And she gave you this token—this love-gage by which evil is kindled as by a fire?"

"She threw it. It fell on the road. I lifted it up!" said Raith, determined to tell the truth.

Beattie, resolved to assist him to tell it all, added, "And I saw it fall from beneath his doublet upon the hearth as he rose from prayer!"

And he threw it again on the stone to mark the spot.

"It is enough! Go!" said the old man, pointing with his hand to the door. "Silence, woman!"

He grasped his wife by the shoulder, gripping her as he had gripped the stone mantelpiece, "I will be the master in this house while I live. Let him begone. He is no son of mine——"

"The lad has long to repent, being young," interrupted Gil, whose words were few.

"I bid you hold your peace lest I curse you also, Gil

Ellison," the voice of the old man dominated the house, "go—I command you, lest a worse thing befall you. Hence to your Jezebel—to your dancer by the wayside. There is neither part nor lot for you here in this house. On your own head be it!"

But his mother said softly, "Go, lest he curse thee—I will meet thee by the well!"

And with that Raith Ellison went forth from his father's house, without attempt at justification of self or any word of reproach because of injustice.

For he knew that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, and deep in his heart of hearts he knew himself to be Samaritan-born. There was a something of pride in it too, the recklessness that comes of heady youth, and the hope, scarce avowed, that *She* would not laugh at him any more. So Raith kept his head up and went through the door of his birth-house an exile and an outcast.

Gil had disappeared. His mother sat watching her opportunity. Gentle Euphrain wept without noise in her corner by the spinning-wheel. Murdoch made inarticulate noises, as if on the point of scolding his horses at the plough. Beattie sat studiously curved over the great Bible, but the smile on his thin lips belied his seeming humility.

Only Peden the Prophet sat still and looked straight before him, neither speaking nor seeming to have any cognizance of what went forward about him. One by one they dropped away—the mother to the well, Gil to waylay his brother further on—Murdoch divided in mind whether to break Beattie's bones or to lay his head on the stable door and sob out his soul. Euphrain—well, Euphrain went to pray as only a white-souled girl of the Faith can pray.

So the two old men were left alone. Peden the Prophet raised himself to his full height, and strode across to where William Ellison stood still trembling with the agony of his contending heart.

"The sop is still in the dish," he said enigmatically. "I misdoubt ye have but cast out doubting Thomas, and left Judas who betrayed his Master at home to carry the bag!"

CHAPTER FIVE

HIS MOTHER'S KEEPSAKE

It was by the well under the alder-bushes at the loaning-end that Raith waited for his mother. He knew that Gil was near, though he had not seen him go by. But Gil's comings and goings were ever silent as the shadow of the bird upon the hillside. Raith knew that presently he would see his brother, but in the meantime there was his mother.

She came. Her arms were about his neck and she sobbed on his bosom. For the first time Raith felt himself a man, and comforted her.

"Your father will not always be angry," she said, lifting up her head, "he will forgive. I ken him!"

"I do not wish to be forgiven—I have done no wrong!" said Raith, determinedly.

"Oh, laddie—laddie," pleaded his mother, "humble yourself to your faither—I pray you! Ye are my bairn—and oh, ye sang sae sweetly 'The Lord's my shepherd' and 'Annie o' Lochryan' when ye had but three years o' your age!"

"My father will not forgive—nor I forget," said Raith, "it is better as it is. This is not a work of to-day!"

"Then, laddie," said his mother, "gang straight to my brother David, that is a ship's captain and dwells in the Harbour of Laith, in a braw ceiled house o' his ain. He will not deny ye shelter for Marjory his sister's sake!"

"I cannot promise, mother," he said, "I have been outcasted. I am a fugitive and a vagabond on the face of the earth. They have driven me forth this day as a beast is driven with dogs!"

"Nay, nay, laddie," moaned his mother, "that was never thy father's thought!"

"Thought or no thought," said Raith, "it is done! I am sent forth, my life only in my hands."

"Nay, nay," said his mother, "but come back and I will plead with your father!"

"He is none of my father, for he disowns me," said Raith, with boyish obstinacy. And also, deep down in his heart, there was the thought, unaccustomed and intoxicating as a beaker of strong wine, that at last—at last, he was free.

"At least, bairn," said his mother, "ye shall not go with the empty hand." And she drew from a great side pocket, tied about and about her waist with cordage, a worn, black leather wallet. It was fat and chinked as it passed from hand to hand.

"It is the butter and cheese siller," she whispered with a kind of piteous glee, "and all my own to give!"

Raith hesitated a moment, but something of his mother's Eastland sense prevailed. He took the wallet and kissed her. She clung to him.

"I must haste me back, or they will be wondering," said the old woman, clinging the closer, "ye will not forget yer mither?"

"Mother—mother!" sobbed her youngest-born—the child of her age, dearest of all.

There was silence between them. The night wind over the moors breathed on them and was gone. The well water slept sweet and limpid beneath, unseen in the darkness. Their spirits were troubled by Something, as it were the passage of a spirit. It made their hearts tender at the same moment.

"Is she that terrible bonny?" murmured his mother, low—ah, so very low in his ear.

"She—who?" prevaricated her son, though he knew.

"The sodjers' lass—I do not mind the name of her."

That also was an untruth—she could not get the name out of her mind—night nor day.

"The sergeant's daughter?" questioned Raith, trying to stand upright.

"No, no," she said, holding him closer down to her, "tell me—is she bonny?"

"Aye," said Raith.

"She will never love ye like your mither!"

"She does not love me at all! She scorns me—she laughs at me!"

His mother was silent a while. Then after thought, she spoke.

"Aye, that's the travelled road," she said. And then with sudden fierceness, "I wonder she is no shamed."

"Why for should she be shamed?"

"To turn a bairn against his ain mither."

Raith clasped her about, and kissed the wet, withered cheek.

"Shame on her!" she cried, stamping her foot.

"But she has done nothing," said Raith, "only laughed at me."

"And the link o' broom?" suggested his mother, cunningly but also wistfully. She hoped that he would deny that too. "She never gied ye that, did she? She just lost it, and ye fand it on the road?"

She spoke with suppressed eagerness and some pitifulness.

"No!" said Raith, truthfully, "she threw it and it fell at my feet. But oh, mither, she laughed awesome bonny. I mind it yet. If ye had but heard it, mither."

Marjory Ellison stamped her foot the second time.

"Oh, the witch," she cried, "to cast the glamour on my laddie—on my Raith. She micht hae had her pick o' a' the rest!"

She held him a long time in her arms, betwixt anger and tears.

"Ye'll be seeing her," she said, at length, "oh, aye—dinna deny. I ken. But never let her persuade ye that she loves ye better than your auld mither. For she doesna—she canna. Nae woman can. How mickle wad she forgie ye, think ye? Were it but the matter o' anither joe? Naething! Not her! I ken young lasses. But your mither, bairn, she wad forgie ye gin ye cam' to her reid fae head to foot in the blood o' God's saints! Aye, gin ye were black wi' sin as the reek that goeth up frae the everlasting burning, there wad aye be a place for ye here—*here*, where I suckled ye in my days of pride. Let the young seek the young! The Almighty himsel' canna say nay to that. But mind ye, Raith, when lover and friend forsake ye, think then upon your auld mither!"

And without waiting for any reply, she went her way weeping.

But a hundred yards off she turned and came running back hastily like one who has forgotten something.

"There," she said, "I lifted it when they werena looking. I had meant to pluck it bit by bit and cast it in the fire. But, woe is me, I canna! I ken ye wad like it, Raith, or ye wadna hae carried it beneath your waistcoat. But oh, mind that your puir mither lies the nicht lang wi unshut e'e, think on ye!"

She was gone, and in Raith's hand there lay, barely discernable in the darkness, something familiar, thin, and round. One or two yellow budlets winked at him like glow-worms in the gloom, and he smelled the faint perfume which had been on the silk ties.

His mother had brought him back Ivie Rysland's gage!

CHAPTER SIX

SERGEANT GRIF TAKES SWORD EXERCISE

It was in the clear dawn of the May morning. Raith looked over the steep sudden bluff above the Kersland quarry, out of which the Laird had built his new House of Kerslandhill. In the distance he could hear the merry marching music of the kettle-drums, as the dragoons rode away on some of their frequent errands. Then the fifes cut in, keenly for a moment as they breasted a brae on the rocky road to Dumfries. Anon again they were silent, lost in the dell, and only the dry *rattle-te-tap* of the drums lifted itself to the young outcast's ear.

He had listened patiently to all Gil's good advice, and taken note of his directions as to caves and refuges. But all the night long his heart had been singing because of this—that in the morning he would go down to the village, no man daring to say him nay. He knew where she lodged. Every morning she came out to the woods to seek a nosegay of flowers—thyme, mayblossom, broom-flourish—whatsoever of the brave common blooms came first to her hand. Then he would see her. Already his mother was only a little ache in his heart, very far back. Everything else mattered nothing. He would see her. She lodged with her father in Widow McNab's, who (so they said in Irongray) kept good stock of both French brandy and Highland *usquebach* and who at any rate was jovial and jolly-comrade with all and sundry, especially with the gentlemen of His Majesty's dragoons. For which, good reason why! Had she not come down with one Rory McNab in the year of the Highland Host? And, then, Rory getting his throat cut when out plundering too promiscuously, his consort had stayed on in the house he had taken for her in Irongray village. But little enough Raith cared for Widow McNab or her departed spouse.

Very early, as he waited, watching the widow's chimneys still solidly black against the pale lemon sky of the tardy east, Raith had noticed an unwonted stir beneath him. First a trumpet blew three times, at the bridge head, then in the midst of the village and lastly down by the smithy where the burn flows over the road.

Anon lights twinkled here and there. Lanterns moved along to stables, swinging from unseen hands a foot or so above the ground. Oaths military and all the rude vocabulary of the camp, such as his ear was still shocked to encounter, came up to him as he lay stretched out on the great willow-trunk on the edge of Kersland wood.

Lastly fife and drum titillated his ear, and beat responsive in the region of his waist-belt. They made him feel somehow proud. She had heard them all her life—perhaps that was why!

Lumbering carts passed creaking far beneath, the cries of the baggage-masters mingling with the sharper "Heigh-Ups" of carters encouraging their sluggard beasts. His Majesty's dragoons were on the march.

A sudden and terrible fear took hold of Raith Ellison. Perhaps she had gone away and he would see her no more. The light in the East was brighter now. He could see Widow McNab's white chimney, which Sergeant Grif Rysland had whitewashed for her with his own hands in the manner of the Low Countries, a remarkable complaisance in a King's officer, as all the village were never tired of remarking with something of a smirk.

Already the music was much fainter. The waggons rumbled more distantly, and only once in a while the brave rattle of the kettle-drums came to his ear as the troop crowned some eminence. Widow McNab was sweeping out her back door, and her hedge was patched white with towels and dish clouts. She seemed like one who cleans out lodgings, left empty after the departure of long-standing tenants.

Raith rose from the willow-trunk, upon which he had been lying prone, principally on his elbows and chin. He moved forward to find out the truth—his heart thumping upon Ivie's wristlet till you could see it move under his grey coat.

So all in a moment, and though he knew the country, quite unexpectedly, he came to the quarry's edge. He paused aghast as he looked over.

He saw in the clear morning light a little group of men beneath him. Two of them were stripped to the waist, guarding only their white shirts, and the sleeves of their right arms were rolled up above the elbow. The more richly dressed and laced was of the middle height, stoutish, with an ugly truculent face, now very red and angry. He was attacking with his rapier fiercely, stamping his foot and scowling, while the other, a tall man, his wrist low and his weapon extended, seemed hardly to do more than move the point of his sword in a circle. This second combatant was a dark, thin man. Bushy black eyebrows met over his nose, without forming the least curve of an arch. Thick moustaches, which perhaps owed a little of their raven gloss to the art of cosmetic, drooped from the corners of a firm mouth, with something grimly humorous even now in the set of it.

The onlookers (all, save one, in uniform) shrugged their shoulders and glanced at one another occasionally when the assault waxed fiercer or the tall dark man turned his wrist with more than his usual easy dexterity.

"Are you now ready to ask the lady's pardon?" cried the defender, suddenly bending his black brows into a knot.

"Never—let her and you together go to——"

But the destination was never indicated. The long rapier, describing a somewhat larger curve, turned aside a furious thrust, an inch farther than usual. The dark man took a step forward, and by some magic a hand's-breadth of dulled steel stood out behind the assailant's back, a little beneath the shoulder-blade and on the left side.

It was visible no more than a moment. The next, he of the eyebrows was cleansing his rapier calmly, while his opponent lay doubled up in an ignoble heap exactly as if a horse had kicked him.

"And now, gentlemen," observed the victor, calmly replacing his coat, "are you all perfectly satisfied? Or are there any more of Lag's levies who aspire to insult the daughter of Sergeant-Major Grif Rysland of His Majesty's dragoons? Speak quickly, for I have wasted overmuch time already. I must overtake my company."

But all appeared busy with the fallen man and answered nothing. The Sergeant-Major buttoned himself up, looked carefully to every item of his equipment, brushed away a speck or two of dust from his sleeve, and swung his plumed hat courteously upon his head.

"If ye have aught to say to me—well, ye know where to find me. Good day!"

His horse stood ready saddled down by the watering-trough at the roadside. He strode proudly away, carelessly too, as if he did as much every day of his life. As he mounted and rode off, one of the men who had been so busy, lifted his head and looked after him.

"Sir Robert will be little pleased with this morning's work. Laird Houston was aye a great crony of his. I trow Grif Rysland will lose his coat, if no more, for this ploy."

"Pshaw!" returned the other, he who wore no military dress, but seemed rather some surgeon by the care and detail of his examination, "coats—what are coats of red or coats of blue, even when laced with gold? He gave you every chance, if ye had aught to say on behalf of the Laird of Lag or any other. Why, my old duffel and riding whip equipped quite as bold a man as any striped jay-piet of you all! To my thinking, 'tis you that will have to answer to Grier of Lag. He has lost a good henchman, and, what is worse, a jolly bottle companion. As for Sergeant Grif, I see not that he has done any great wrong. A man may surely cross steel with steel in his daughter's quarrel!"

"Well," growled the first speaker, "I suppose you will give certificate that he is dead. Where shall we take the carrion?"

"Into the widow's, yonder," said the Doctor. "The coast is clear, and if all tales be true, Laird Houston kenned the road well enough when he was in life."

"Aye, aye," cried the third, who had not yet spoken, "if auld Sandy hath the right sow by the tail, Houston will be brave and warm this coming winter. He was ever the prince of rufflers, spared neither man nor woman, and swore better than Dalzell himself."

"I have seen him drink eight bottles and sit in his chair without holding to the table. Only Peter Porson the curate, could man him at that!"

"Glory," cried the surgeon, "if there be a God, and a judgment, and all that—what a black surprise is Houston getting even now!"

And with this requiem from those who knew him best, the dead Houston, henchman and boon companion of Sir Robert Grier of Lag, was carried into the swept and garnished house of the Widow McNab and laid straight and peaceable in Ivie Rysland's bed.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE ENLISTMENT OF A RENEGADE

Raith Ellison was at the bridge-end of Dumfries long before either Sergeant Grif or any of his company. For the heavy tumbril waggons jolted lumbering along the rough road, which, though of the regulation twenty feet from side to side, took small account of the stones and ruts that lay between. Then there was his daughter Ivie to see to—his officer, Cornet Grahame to report to. This report was of the briefest, being as follows:

"Well?" queried the Cornet.

The Sergeant-Major clucked deep in his throat in a suggestive manner and turned up his eyes. At which, perfectly advised, Cornet Grahame shook his head.

"All the same it is a pity," he said, "the devil of a pity! I know not what my uncle will say. There have been too many broils between the regular troops and the county militia. My Lord Liddesdale will be bitter. He holds hard to what Lag and Morton can do for the King in Galloway, and this fellow was his favourite bottle-man!"

"I gave him every chance," said the sergeant, easily, "three times did I hold him at my point, and three times did I ask him if he were not yet ready to demand pardon. Then I should have kicked him and come my way!"

Cornet Grahame nodded.

"No soldier of the King could do more," he said. "If it were not for such as you, Sergeant Grif, these militia cock-sparrows might end by thinking themselves soldiers. But just now the thing is something of a pity. Last year or next year, you might have spitted the whole gang, like larks on a skewer. But here and now, by Mistress Gwyn's pretty thimble, 'tis something of a pity! Hey, what have we yonder?"

It was Raith Ellison, looking very lithe and erect, who stood on a little eminence at the place where the river-road from Lincluden joined that longer and better one by which the dragoons had ridden townwards.

"A handsome lad, Grif Rysland," murmured the officer, "would he list, think you?"

"I have seen the face—his coat looks Whiggamore," answered the sergeant, "and yet I know not. There is a dash of the devil about him that we might make something of!"

"Hey, lad, come down," cried Cornet Grahame. "Why stand there gaping like Gillyflower Joan at the fair? Hast never seen a red coat before, or heard the drums rattle?"

Raith came down as he was bidden. His heart was beating rarely. He had seen a man slain that morning, and there was the man who had done it riding along as comfortably as if he had done no more than crack a duck's egg for his breakfast. Then the roll of the drums and the high clean treble of the fifes made him quiver deep within. What a life!

And his face flushed. For the thought came to him, as he saw the officers whisper, that he too might be of that band. Treason to his own? The betraying of all he had left behind? Well, he *had* left it behind. They had cast him out. He was free. Stingingly sweet and overwhelming, the thought of riding in gallant company rose within the lad. Great sin is ever heady, and in the first days more than repays the sinner, by that joy of defiant pride which wrought Satan's original downfall. The rest comes after.

"Your name?" demanded the Cornet.

"Raith Ellison!" said the young man.

The brows of Cornet Grahame drew ominously together and he shook his head.

"Of Mayfield?" he said. "Is not that reported a rebel hive? We would have routed it out a dozen times but for Rob Grier, who hath some respect for blood kin, renegade that he is."

"Let me question him, if such be your will," said the sergeant in the officer's ear. The Cornet nodded.

"You know my daughter?" said Grif Rysland, sternly.

"I have spoken with her," said truth-speaking Raith.

"And where? Out with it!" cried the sergeant truculently.

"In the Kersland Wood!"

"And when and how often?"

"Both yesterday, and before—as often as I could!" answered Raith, nothing daunted.

"Do you know I have killed a man for less—done without my knowledge?"

"His blood is on your sword," retorted Raith. "I saw you in the Kersland quarry hole!"

Sergeant Grif started, and took his hand off his sword-hilt where he had placed it.

"It seems that you know too much, my birkie," he cried. "Will you give me satisfaction for the insolence of holding communication with my daughter—as did the Laird of

Houston this morning? Or will ye come to headquarters to be tried for a spy?"

"There is no just reason why I should do either," said Raith, who gained confidence in the presence of such men as Grif and Cornet Grahame. He understood them by nature.

"On the contrary, every reason!" quoth the Sergeant. "By your own tale ye have spied on His Majesty's officers. Equally, ye have held rendezvous with my daughter in the green wood—which is a hurt to my honour! Therefore choose ye, Sir Whiggamore, fight or hang!"

"I will fight!" said Raith, manfully.

"Ye have skill of fence, then?" said Cornet Grahame, looking at him with interest. "Ye have seen the Sergeant-Major at work."

"I can handle a broad-sword with most," said Raith, "I had never one of these three-cornered blades in my grip. But for all that, I ask no favours of any man!"

The Sergeant dismounted, with great solemnity and severity in his countenance, and stripping his coat, he pulled out his sword and stood ceremoniously on guard.

"The gentleman does not wear steel," said the cornet, "let him have mine."

And with much grace he presented Raith with the hilt of his rapier. They saluted, Raith imitating his opponent as best he might.

"Have ye aught to say—in case?" interjected the Sergeant-Major grimly.

Raith drew from his inner pocket the little despoiled circlet of withered broom, and put it into the hands of the astonished Cornet Grahame.

"I had it from Mistress Ivie," he said, "will you be at the charge of giving it back to her?"

"A lad after mine uncle's own heart!" cried the officer, flinging himself from his saddle, "he must be one of us. We must embody him at once, or else that thief of the world Peter Inglis may lay hands on him for his company of hen-roost thieves!"

And the next moment, to Raith's astonishment, he found his late inquisitor and his antagonist vehemently shaking him by the two hands.

Thus it was that the youngest son of the ancient covenanting house of Mayfield found his way into the ranks of His Majesty's Royal Dragoons, commissioned to put down and extirpate all hill-folk, Cameronians, Conventiclers, and followers of devious courses whenever and wherever found.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SABBATH SILENCES

It was the third day after this before Raith Ellison, renegade, saw the girl of the cherry ribbons. There is reason to believe, however, that in spite of her start of surprise upon the occasion, it was by no means the first time that Ivie Rysland had seen the new recruit, whom Cornet Grahame was so proud of adding to his company.

For one thing the military riding lessons were given on the sands down by Nith bank a little to the northward of Devorgilla's Bridge, and the Sergeant-Major's lodgings looked directly out upon that cheerful scene.

But it was manifestly a vast surprise to the girl just the same. When she met Raith at twilight near the bridge-end, his figure already looked well-set and handsome in its uniform of scarlet and blue. Ivie paused and threw up her hands.

"I surrender!" she cried. "I am a woman and unarmed! Moreover I have not come from the meeting-house at the bridge-end over there, but only from buying a few simple eggs for my father's breakfast. He likes them raw, beaten up with white wine!"

To Raith she seemed even more lovely than ever before, her brown-black hair snooded with cherry-colour, the glow of the sunset mellow on her face, and such an all-bewildering smile, something less contemptuous than of yore, perhaps, but by no means less teasing.

"I am going back to barracks," said Raith, glad to show his acquaintance with military phrases, for then only the lodgings of the horse were so named, the infantry shelters being called quarters or even "huts."

"But what do you here, Sir Whig?" demanded Ivie, "did not I see you last on your way home from a conventicle, full to the brim with the divisions of Sandy Peden's sermon on the Hill Tarbellion?"

"They cast me off," said Raith, fiercely, "I owe them nothing."

"What, you have run away from home?"

"I ran not away—not a foot—my father disowned me," repeated Raith, "he forbade me his door."

"And why?"

"Because——" said Raith, and paused shamedly. But Ivie only laughed a ringing peal, till the douce burghers of

Dumfries sauntering on the sands to drink the evening air, turned to look at her, the elders frowningly, the younger with gnawing envy. The red coats got everything.

"I know," she said, "it is common to the regiment. Cornet Grahame, beshrew his impudent tongue, hath made a song of it. It was because of staying talking with me for two hours in the Kersland wood. The sin seemed not so dreadful to me. I but asked for a little instruction, and, if I remember aright, you were even rude to me. *That* (she added) is, as you will find, no safe game in this regiment."

"Let us walk a little way back across the bridge," she added, "it is not beseeming that I should stand on the sands of Dumfries with a gentleman private of the guards. Tongues are censorious, and my father cannot run a whole borough town through the gizzard as he did Laird Houston. Apropos, I have something to say as to that. It concerns you, young man. I trust you hold not much to your horse exercise. Because you are likely to be dismounted for some time, and my father with you. There is a pother about this matter of the duel, and it will be more wholesome for my father to get some other employ for a current of months, and to take you with him. As I understand, you were a witness of the fight, and saw him pink the foul-mouthed squire. So to-morrow when Colonel Grahame comes on his inspection, speak to him boldly, eye to eye, and solicit to be sent to do duty along with your sponsor, Sergeant-Major Grif Rysland—as being art and part in his fault. That will be a service which my father will not forget."

"And you, Mistress Ivie? Will you remember?"

She nodded. "I will give you a better keepsake than a wisp of besom-broom," she said, softly. And again in the glowing dusk the smile glittered. She held out her hand.

"Shake it," she ordered, "do not kiss it. We are not in the Kersland wood. Even to kiss hands is expensive in the muster, and might stand you in a pistol bullet or six inches of steel in the by-going. It is no laughing matter to be the only well-looking girl on the King's muster-roll!"

She shook her finger-tips daintily at him, and passed away across the Sands. Raith turned and watched her go, her slender young body moving easily, with a swing that he had never seen in human creature before.

And then, it struck him that at that moment Euphrain would be in the milk-house at home, and his mother—no, he would not think of that. His eyes followed Ivie Rysland at a distance, glorying in the turn of her head, and proud too of the looks of the burghers and their wives at his tall figure and rich uniform.

A bold wench ran from a court-entry and laughed in his face. He turned on his heel, and she cried after him, "Ho, my He-Saint in scarlet, where d'ye lodge? At the sight of the Skull-and-Cross-bones by your countenance. Go wipe your moustache with a psalm-book. A soldier—you! No more a soldier than the town pump!"

But by this time Raith Ellison, completely restored in his own good opinion, was out of hearing.

It was the morrow when Colonel Grahame arrived, and, as Ivie Rysland had foretold, made both perquisition and inquisition. Also, as she had advised, Raith stood up and told the truth, asking that he might have part and lot in whatever might be done to his superior officer, Sergeant-Major Grif Rysland.

"We cannot lose the sergeant," said John Grahame, "that's certain! A sword-arm like that must not swing from a gibbet in the wind, as Liddesdale might think fit to make it, if he gat hold of him in his present mind. To the Bass shall you both go. That will be safest—the sergeant to command, and you to do your duty. There is a new haul of prisoners from the West Country, and I ride out to-morrow at daybreak for the moors to drag across Galloway a yet wider net. Off with you, Sergeant Grif. And keep up your sword practice. For the day may come when both the King's Majesty and John Grahame may need it sorely!"

And the net which was cast over the moor countries by the troopers was indeed straight of mesh and wide of sweep. Colonel Grahame took the north, towards Carsphairn and the Kells, ground every inch of which was familiar to him. Douglas of Morton and the Laird of Shieldhill cut straight across the rough country between Penpont and Dalry. As was his custom, Lag rode red-wud through his own domains. Never since the months after Bothwell had there been such a driving.

Sir Robert Grier of Lag and Rockhall was at this time still young, no more than thirty years of his age, but excess of living and the ill trade he had taken to had marked him more like a man of fifty. Of his person he was tall, stout, and strong—of that bitter, black, South Country breed in which opposition raises the very devil of savagery.

It was among his own folk that he practised by preference—his tenants and neighbours whom he plundered in the

King's name. There lay the sting of it. He himself boasted of it. He would gar them bend, or he would gar them break. He said it in open market. He had, in the phrase of the people and the time, taken a *thriep* with himself, and if he must wade chin-deep through blood and hatred and engage the eternal loathing of a whole people, he would yet keep his "thriep." Such at thirty years was Robert Grier.

This day he was particularly sharp-set upon ill-doing owing to the killing of his henchman Houston. And Peter Porson, the curate, who for ever egged him on to mischief by scraps of information slid cunningly into his ear, bade him remember that one of the Mayfield Ellisons had been present at the death. Lag became instantly furious, and marked the house of William Ellison for an early visit.

"Over long I have let them slip," he cried, "kinsfolk or no kinsfolk—I owe them one for poor Houston."

"And beside," added Peter Porson slily, "the house is no better than an asylum for runagate preacher folk and the hottest outliers of the Wanderers!"

"By all the hounds of Satan I'll wander them," cried Het Rob, "so that they shall never be found again, or my name is not Robert Grier!"

And the rough-riding persecutor pulled his steel cap well down on his brow.

* * * * * *

It was the Sabbath morning. The stillness about the house of Mayfield might have been felt. No breath of air, the young sun level on the moors, the little alder and birch-bushes along the water-courses casting long shadows westwards. The farm-buildings formed one great shadowy mass in the hollow of the brown cup—the "taps" of the hills were all lined hard and clear above. On the face of things only the crying of the lambs as they took the breast of the brae, trotting up and up the little four-inch paths they had worn for themselves among the heather. Gil followed Beattie with his eyes as he set out munching the oat-cake and cheese he had furnished himself with. Then the elder went without haste to water the horses in the stable.

The Day of Days had begun at Mayfield, and out in the chamber at the barn-end, between the double walls which enclosed a snug if narrow bed-room, lay the great and famous preacher, Peden the Prophet.

Gil went about his work very thoughtfully. It was the first morning that he had ever spent at Mayfield without "the bairn." Where was Raith? Gil did not know. His place had been with his mother, all through that terrible week. What his father thought was known only to the God he worshipped leaning upon the top of his staff. To all others, even to Mr. Peden, he had been stern, answering only when they spoke of his youngest son, "Better to cut off that member which offends, and to cast it from you, rather than that the whole body should be cast into hell fire."

Still there was a sort of divine hope in the hearts of all about the house of Mayfield that Sabbath morning. This could not be the end. He—the dreamer of dreams, the seer of the future, the prophet—had not cursed Raith Ellison. His mother minded that, and, though she understood no more of his hidden utterances than did the others—still, in her heart of hearts, hardly allowed even to herself, there was a hope—she looked forward to a day when the Man of God, even Alexander Peden, would bless her boy.

And motherlike, that this might be the sooner accomplished, she compassed him about with little attentions, going out to the barn-end between the partitions to make his bed with her own hands—the softest feather-bed, the downiest pillow, the warmest blankets—plentiful provision in case of detention, such as a bottle of milk, cakes, and ale home-brewed. All this, till the Prophet held up his hands.

"Mistress," he said, "ye will spoil me for the sides of the hills, the cauldrife caves of Crichope Linn, the ledges and crannies of the Colvend beuchs. I might as well be in my ain manse at Glenluce as in the Mayfield barn."

But Marjory Simpson only smiled, and made assault all the more on the Prophet after her own recipe.

"Prophet—or no Prophet," she said, "he is a man. And God Almighty hasna yet made the man that a woman canna win to her will by taking heed to the meat he eats, the bed he lies down on, and the claithes he puts on."

She acted accordingly, and safe is it to say that the wardrobe of the outed minister of Glenluce had never been in such a state since the day he had shut the door of his pulpit, and debarred any intruder to enter therein till one should open it with the authority of God and the Presbytery, even as Alexander Peden himself had done.

"It's a blessed thing my faither is blind," said Euphrain to her mother, "or he wad ken his best breeks on the Prophet's shanks, and on his back the coat that I never saw oot o' the drawer but twice a year to air!"

"Hoots, lassie," said her mother, easily, "what for are ye speakin'? The Man o' God disna ken ony mair than William Ellison. He would never find the differ, if ye were to lay him oot a suit o' Murdoch's auld harvest corduroys! And as for your faither, he wad as sune gang aboot dressed like the Pope o' Rome, carrying the muckle keys, as wear yon black braidclaith wi' the lang tails that set him sae weel the day he was married. I juist e'en let doon the skirts a kennin' and it mak's a maist sober and composed coat for a minister—aye, even for Maister Peden."

"And the cloak?"

"The cloak, lassie? Whatna cloak?"

This with an air of surprise as one who hears a thing named for the first time.

"Dinna pretend, mither, dinna pretend," said Euphrain. "If my faither be blind, *I* am no even short i' the sight. I mean your ain mantle of good English whole-cloth, passamented with silk and single-welted with taffeta. Ye hae lifted the silk and doubled it in at the side with black fustean,—a fine thing for a prophet to lie out in the moss-hags wi' half a stone weight of woman's finery on his back."

"Havers," said her mither, "gin the bit cloak keeps him warm, his hurdies will never ken the differ. Prophesying brings no light in the matter of clothes to your back."

"But what for are ye in such a taking about Mr. Peden, mother?" persisted her daughter. "I have seen Mr. Cameron here, and also Mr. Semple and Mr. Hepburn, with others of as great fame, but here was never half this fyke, that ye hold about Mr. Peden!"

Mistress Ellison held herself silent for a moment, and then, leaning quickly nearer to her daughter, she whispered, "He spoke kindly aboot him! And ilka time that I tak' a bite or a sup to the barn, or a change o' raiment, I aye say in his lug in the byegaun, 'Put up a bit word o' prayer for my puir Raith—I'm thinkin' he's maybe needin' it gye and sair!'"

* * * * * *

It was the time of the morning worship in the wide kitchen of Mayfield. Mr. Peden himself had come in to conduct it. There was a humble and a solemn hush, as he sat at the table-end with the Book open before him, gazing out of the little window with its panes of green glass, blurred like a muddy whirlpool.

"*The hireling seeth the wolf coming. He leaveth his sheep and fleeth!*" said the Prophet suddenly. And with that fell on a kind of reverie, his face wrapt and illumined, and his lips moving softly as if in prayer.

The family all sat about, not knowing what he meant. There could be no personal application. Beattie was out on the hill-tops with his flock. If any danger threatened the house of Mayfield, he would surely warn them in time. What meant this then, "The hireling seeth the wolf coming. He fleeth and leaveth the sheep?"

Then all suddenly Peden the Prophet bowed his head as if taking an order from Someone Unseen.

"Even so, Lord," he said. "Thy will be done. For the little while that remains to him, poor old Sandy's bones can rest as well in a dungeon cell as on feather beds. But I grieve in my heart for thae poor folks, who hitherto have sheltered in the bieldy howe from the storm. But the Lord, even He is the God, that chooseth the good of all souls and doeth it."

And lifting up his hand to enforce the silence which only he had broken, he gave out in a loud even voice—"Let us praise the Lord in the Hundred and Second Psalm:"

Thou shalt arise and mercy yet,
  Thou to Mount Zion shalt extend,
Her time for favour which was set,
  Behold, is now come to an end.

Murdoch's sweet tenor lifted itself in the melody, and the sound of the singing passed through the open door, across the straw-littered yard, and so out upon the moor. And there it met with three companies of Lag's troopers, lawless and savage militia levies, the scum and the pest of the country. Lag himself rode well in front, black, tall, and red-faced, an ugly foreboding of anger in his bloodshot eyes. But when he heard the sound of the singing he reined in his horse sharply, and motioned to his men to stop.

"Give me a look-on at your psalm-buik, Sir Robert!" grimaced Curate Peter in his ear, "I have forgotten mine in my prayer-closet."

Then Lag, with a curl of his thick upper lip which showed the teeth like a dog before he bites, half drew a double-barrelled horse-pistol from his holster.

"This," he said, "is my psalm-book. Also it is my holy clerk, for right well it can raise the tune! But for a wager, 'tis better at saying 'Amen!'"

CHAPTER NINE

LAG'S CLERK SAYS 'AMEN'

"A CONVENTICLE and more than the statute allows of people assembled!" cried the Curate, pointing a finger in at the door. But Lag, dismounted, pushed him aside with no ceremony.

"And who but Peden himself, Peden the Prophet," he cried, gleefully, "Peden with his face washen and decked as for a marriage! Surely, Sandy, your familiar spirit was not under your hand this morning!"

There was joy unhaltered among Lag's bold riders that day, and even by the chief the death of his henchman was already half forgotten. This capture would be worth something more to him than a mere Baronetage of Nova Scotia. Colonel Grahame himself had never made such a haul for all his hard riding, midnight, twilight, and in the grey of the morn.

"Make all get without," cried Lag. "Put them in the peat-shed and set a guard! Death to the man that lets one escape! We will rout out more than these, I trow. The place is a perfect bees' byke of rebels!"

"Your father would have liked ill to ken that his son should so have used his mother's cousin," said William Ellison, bending his veiled eyes upon the young Laird of Lag.

Lag snapped his fingers and laughed hoarsely.

"I have given ye over much rope, ye old Whig," he cried, "you and your mother's cousin both! My complaisance has marred me in the king's service. Now I am done with it and you. Tie him up!"

The men were removing the prisoners one by one, while Lag looked at a tally list he held in his hand.

"How is this?" he said, suddenly, "you have other two sons, William Ellison—four in all. Where are they?"

"One is with the sheep on the hill," said the old man, simply, "and one is not."

"Dead?"

"Aye, dead to this house and to the company of all men of grace!"

"I want none of your Daniel and Revelation riddles," cried the persecutor, "out with the truth in plain words—where is your youngest son?"

"I know not," said William Ellison with lofty serenity, "for cause I bade him go forth from this house. He went, and hath not returned."

Then a certain Mardrochat, a spy from the headwaters of the Ken, leaned over and whispered in his ear. At first Lag looked doubtful, but after a little he nodded.

"It may be," he murmured, "they are a cowardly psalm-singing set, but after all there was some good Grier blood in them a generation or two back, and it may have come out in this young sprig! We shall see!"

He turned to the old man.

"Good news will not keep," he said. "I make haste to communicate it. I have just heard that your son has joined the sect of believers known as Cornet Grahame's company of dragoons, and that he was present at the killing of the Laird of Houston in the quarry-hole of Kersland by Sergeant Rysland, at present a fugitive from justice!"

The old man looked steadily out of his misty grey eyes in the direction of the speaker's voice.

"Of all that I ken nothing," he said, quietly, "it is possible that you speak the truth. Raith Ellison is no longer son of mine, whether he serve king or devil—or, like some I could name, even if he served both!"

"Have a care!" cried Lag, truculently. "Men have died for less!"

The old man motioned with his hand somewhat contemptuously.

"Ye can only do that which your warrant permits," he answered.

"No," cried the young man, waxing angry, "not so. As to Peden the Prophet there, I have my orders—to Edinburgh and the Privy Council he must go. But with you and any in this house, I stand upon my powers of justiciary. I can stell you all up in a row against the dyke, and make an end in two volleys of musketry. Then perhaps I might inherit the Mayfield as chief mourner and nearest heir. That is well thought on—what say you, you Mardrochat?"

The spy laughed, as it was his duty to do.

The women, Euphrain and her mother, had not been guarded like the others, but were ordered to get refreshments for the men as fast as they might, lest worse should befall. Suddenly from the little, built-on dairy at the corner of the dwelling-house there came a cry. Gil, completely handcuffed and shackled, could only rise to his feet as pale as ashes.

"It is our mother's voice," he said, straining at his bonds.

At the moment they were busy with great slow-moving

Murdoch. But at the first note of distress, he rent the bands like so many thrums of wool, drove the men who tied him this way and that against the wall, and sprang through the door.

"Stop!" cried Gil. "Hold your hand, Murdoch! Sir Robert, I call upon you to protect your kinswomen!"

"Some daffing of the lads!" growled Lag, moving reluctantly to the door, "keep your tongue within your teeth, my Whiggie! It concerns not you!"

"Then," said Gil, "I know whom it will concern and that mightily!"

Nevertheless Lag made haste to go out. What he heard was a sound of loud crying. Then a pistol shot rang out, and Sir Robert was just in time to see Murdoch, white to the lips, seize in both hands a great yoke-pole used for ox-teams on heavy ground, and with one swing of it about his head, drive in the skulls of a couple of troopers, who had issued hastily from the milk-house. These cracked like eggs thrown against a wall, and the lifeless bodies went down like so many sacks of wet sand in the violated silence of that summer Sabbath.

"Shoot him—kill him—he has gone mad!" cried Lag.

"Come on—all of you!" cried Murdoch, with his back to the white wall of the house and the shut door of the dairy behind him.

But the crowd scattered, getting behind trail-carts and pig-stye walls, from which they opened a scattering fire. The bullets spatted on the wall, and buzzed off the cobblestones, but still Murdoch stood erect.

"Come on—or I will!" he shouted, and dashed straight at the foremost.

Then it was seen that the giant was wounded and kept his left hand on his breast. But his movement gave Lag time to run across to the ring-stone to which his horse was tied, and draw the double-barrelled pistol from the holster.

As he turned, Murdoch, still mad with anger and pain, was almost upon him. Lag stood firm. The persecuting squire did not lack courage. Almost as one the two reports rang out, and Murdoch fell dead, doubled upon his ox-pole. It was but an hour since he had been joyously raising the tune at the morning sacrifice. Good simple Murdoch who had never done ill nor thought it all the days of his life—that he of all the house of Mayfield should have been the first victim.

Lag looked at his still smoking pistol, examined the flints, and then said to Mardrochat calmly as he set about reloading it, " Did not I tell you that my holster held the better clerk? Any Whig may raise a tune, but Sir Double-Throat here with his flinty teeth can beat them at saying 'Amen!' "

CHAPTER TEN

THE PALETTE OF PETER PAUL

THAT for which Raith Ellison had sold his birthright came to pass, when, upon three horses supplied by Colonel Grahame for their needs, Sergeant-Major Grif Rysland rode out of Dumfries, his daughter on one side of him, and Gentleman Private Raith Ellison on the other.

Never could any one week in half-a-dozen lives equal the delight of that first journey. The father was kind and familiar, being now away from the discipline of the troop, and having taken a sincere liking to the young man. As for Ivie Rysland, she was inscrutable, as ever. But it would have been a strange thing if some elements of happiness had not mingled with her cup. And doubtless it was so, altogether apart from her state of mind with regard to Raith Ellison. That was by no means serious. "Bothwell Brig" she called him, or sometimes "Young Peden." Indeed, whatever her fancy prompted her at the moment, that was his appellation. But it was perfect June weather—June for once perfect in Scotland, and therefore compact of all excellencies, neither hot nor cold, too early for flies, too late for East winds, in the heart of the longest days. Raith lived for Ivie all day, and dreamed of her all night. He seemed to live a year in twenty-four hours, and the sweetness of stolen waters was in his mouth sleeping and waking.

Sergeant-Major Rysland, a man of moods, in some of which he was not to be dealt with safely, had a habit of riding on ahead, thus leaving the two young people to follow at their leisure. He gave as a reason for this that his orders were to avoid all meeting with his Majesty's forces, till such time as they should reach North Berwick, and he could present to Sir Hew Dalrymple his mandate as commander of the post and prison of the Bass.

It is not to be wondered at, that, thus abandoned to their own resources, the soldier and the maid had much to say to one another. Sometimes Ivie mocked him, but with the best intentions, mockery is of short life and dies down in prolonged *tête-à-têtes*. So it came to pass that mostly Ivie Rysland mocked Raith in her father's hearing, to which the Sergeant would listen with a sardonic smile on his face.

But when they rode together alone, it came to be the rule that after a passage or two in the old mocking spirit, they should lapse into those confidences which lead men and women far—generally the man by speaking and the woman by listening.

On they rode across the brown moorland, through the quivering green pennons of the young woodlands, along the stony travelled roads, ever eastward and yet eastward. Green drove roads wimpled before them across the heather gleaming lonely for miles, with only Grif Rysland pausing on the top of some eminence with his hand to his brow to view the country.

Mostly, however, contrary to all custom, it was Ivie who spoke, and Raith who listened. She told him how she had been born in Holland of a Royalist stock which had dwelt there two generations—of her father ever foremost in fight and fray, and of her mother whom she could but remember as wearing the whitest of caps and the most beautiful of lace collars on her shoulders. She had also learned to say her prayers in a foreign language. Her grandfather and grandmother she remembered better, staid burgher folk moving seldom from the blue-tiled fireplace in which a tiny fire blazed.

Then as she grew up all this vanished and everything was a turmoil of camp and march. She had never left her father since. Now in the service of the Margrave of Brandenburg, now in that of the great Count Palatine, next fighting for the United Provinces, and lastly in the newly raised guards of His Majesty King Charles the Second—Ivie Rysland had wandered without a home, without a friend of her own sex, with only the length of her father's rapier (a very considerable something) between her and the insolence of tongues.

Yet withal there was such a wonderful freshness and abounding youth about the girl that Raith perpetually marvelled to see it. How could it be? She had seen so many things—wandered so far, known so much. Yet she laughed with the clear ripple of running water over the pebbles of a Scottish burn, and her smile was as winsome and eager as that of a child looking at itself in a mirror.

"I wish you knew my mother!" he said, wistfully.

The girl moved uneasily and looked away over the trackless waste of bent and heath.

"She would hate me," she answered, hastily.

"No, no," he went on as eagerly, "she would not. She does not now!"

And he told her all the story of the wristlet of broom, simply and impersonally as if it had been the tale of another.

She made no comment, but there was a moisture in the girl's eyes that had more to do with the sympathy of the unknown woman than with any feeling she had for that woman's son. Yet it was of Raith that she spoke.

" Do you know, you were like a marble angel blowing a trumpet," she said, smiling at him, " I could not help throwing the broom. I am sorry. I am often sorry after!"

And then, seeing the astonishment on his face, she added hastily, " I do not mean the little cheruby things all winglets and fat legs, but the tall thin ones wrapped in sheets blowing long trumpets. You have seen them? Mostly on tombstones they are, all sounding the ' revielly ' for the last day!"

Raith's countenance remained blank as before.

" No, of course," she said, making a little gesture with her hand, " you could not have seen them. That is abroad, in queer old German churches, quaint with coloured stone, black and white like a draught-board. It was down in the Palatinate, I remember, when my father was in command of a garrison, and I went poking about just as I liked. The folk were simple folk and never looked at me. They liked plump girls with apple cheeks. It was *such* a comfort!"

He looked at her, and would have liked to tell her what he thought she was like, but he lacked the courage, till she demanded what he might be staring at. Then, on his failing to answer, she charged him with looking at *her*, which was correct enough. Furthermore, she demanded to be informed if her hair were in her eyes, if her nose was red at the end, and finally to be told what she was like generally He ought to know by this time.

" Whatever you say," she smiled, suddenly radiant, " I will not tell—" And she pointed forward with her hand to where the dark and sombre silhouette of the sergeant-major cut the horizon line.

Raith looked at her, consideringly.

" It is difficult," he said, " even so. I never saw any one in the least like you before."

She nodded, munching a dried fig the while, her little pearly teeth cutting through the pale, leathery surface clean as a tool.

" There is no one in the world in the least like me!" she prompted. " Well, go on!"

" But I thought it was what you seemed to me to look like—that you wanted to know?" Raith went on.

" So it was—so it was—I forgot. To your muttons, Peter Paul!"

"Why do you call me Peter Paul?"

"Oh, he was a great painter in his time—his pictures would wrap up the world neatly in canvas—with a little stretching."

"Well," said Raith Ellison slowly, his blue eyes dwelling dreamily upon the girl, "I can say anything I like if it is true—or if I think so. That is the bargain."

"That is the bargain," said Ivie Rysland, beginning another dried fig.

"Then," said Raith, slowly, collecting himself to tell the exactitude of the truth, for it was his hour, and he must use it, "there is no one so beautiful. That is true, but it is not that. Your hair ripples and the colour changes. It is a different girl one sees each time that you turn your head. It is like when the sun and the cloud shadows chase each other time about upon the breasts of Cairnsmuir. Then your cheek is pale, but yet the red of the rose leaf is underneath, and (he hesitated) I think it is velvet-soft. Sun and rain and wind do not touch it. It is not so with other girls."

She laughed aloud.

"Did I not tell you, you are verily Peter Paul, and will win women by your voice alone. Never tell me that this is your first attempt. You are of the court and have practised madrigals on the damosels of honour ever since you were knee-high and wore long frocks!"

Raith looked bewildered. He could speak his thoughts in words, but this was beyond him.

"I was only telling you," he said, "you gave me leave."

"Gave you leave," she laughed again, but more softly, "why, if I could 'only tell' like that, I would sit all day by the mirror and make love to my own perfections!"

She nodded to him to go on.

"Your lips," Raith drew a breath before he approached this part of the subject (but it was now or never), "your lips are not cherry red like those of our country girls. I remember to have seen the dawn look just like that—the little pale rosy flecks above the gold!"

"Perfect," she cried, clapping her hands—"a courtier and a poet! And they would have made a hill-whig of you. Never!"

"You promised to listen," he said, "you can make game after."

"I am not so sure that I am making game now," said Ivie to herself.

"Then," continued Raith, taking his courage in both hands, "more than all there is the smile which seems to say to me, 'It is a new day and a fine morning. The birds are singing in the light and happiness has come home to the whole round world.'"

Ivie stopped her ears with her fingers.

"Enough—more than enough—much more," she cried, "if I am all that, and can do all that with a smile, there is no use for further talk. Think of what a fine morning it is. I will ride on and join my father!"

And smiling, she set spurs to her beast and rode off without once looking behind.

"Ne'er mind," murmured Raith, greatly comforted, "after all, she listened."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE TRAVELLERS HAD AN ADVENTURE OR TWO BY THE WAY

It was certain that the heart of Raith beat with such glorious exaltation that he actually resolved to keep vigil all night before his lady's door. It was in a little village near the head of the Moffat water—a mere pepper-pot scatter of half-a-dozen poor houses, with a manse set squarely among some tall trees. The curate, a sullen ignorant man, entertained the King's officers with scanty fare, and offered Raith a lodging outside in the hay-loft.

Raith descended to his sentry beat, passing and repassing, till the light went out in the window above. Nothing had happened or seemed likely to happen. So the young man sat down on a much chipped hag-clog or butt of wood used for cutting firewood upon. There he nodded and dreamed, now pulling himself up with a jerk, and anon sinking forward into himself. Suddenly he woke with a start. A man had passed with a gun over his arm. There thirty yards away was his dark figure stalking through the gloom of the early dawning. He went towards the window of the chamber, where high above, Ivie Rysland slept the sleep of the tired and the heart-free.

Rising stealthily Raith followed. At last here was a chance for him. He doubted not that this portended some surprise or attempted treachery. And of necessity his heart rejoiced. The figure paused at a little garden-gate which led down into a sort of vegetable yard, much overgrown with weeds.

Suddenly the man shouldered his gun and fired.

Hardly had the echoes ceased before Raith was upon him and bore him down gasping, his hands meeting about his throat. He saw in a moment that he had to do with the curate.

The sergeant showed himself at the door, and advanced hastily to where the two men lay struggling.

"What is this, Ellison?" he demanded. "Guns and death-grips so near a peaceful manse!"

"He would have fired into Mistress Ivie's window—or yours!" gasped Raith, mentioning the more important treason first.

"Let the man go," ordered the sergeant; "now, curate, explain yourself!"

The dark sullen man gurgled a little, felt carefully all about his throat to assure himself that no permanent damage was done, and then said, "I was but trying a crack at one of the hares that eat my curly greens, when your fool red-coat made me miss my shot!"

"And us our breakfast!" cried the sergeant laughing heartily. Then with a glance at Raith he added, "What, man, have ye been sleeping in your uniform?"

"I heard noises, and I thought it well to make sure," answered Raith, as he thought, with much policy. But the sergeant gave him one cold keen glance from head to foot, nodded grimly, and went within.

"Every man to his liking!" he said for all comment.

After this Raith took to his bed every night like a sensible man, and felt the benefit in the freshness with which he mounted his horse the next morning, his curls yet damp on his brow from the brook water in which he had washed, and, blue day or grey day, the certainty in his heart that for twelve hours more, his life would be irradiated by the sunshine of Ivie Rysland's smile.

They rode high up the Moffat water, and so into the upper circle of brown ridges which forms the cup of St. Mary's Loch. Here the cottages were few, and the farms had all the stock driven off into the fastnesses of the hills. Any travellers whom they sighted instantly took to their heels at the first glimpse of the military scarlet—even as a few weeks before Raith himself would have dived into the untracked deeps of Kersland Wood, had he spied Grif Rysland riding Dumfries-ward with his troop.

They were evidently in a land of the Wanderers, and could expect but little hospitality, save that which fear extorted. Yet sustenance and beds to lie on they must have, if not for their own sakes, at least for Ivie's. It was on this high moor, and pacing gently along, and Ivie rallying Raith upon his supposed prenticeship in lovemaking—all very pleasant and to the taste of young people, with only the present and each other in the heads of them—that suddenly they heard the crack of a pistol, and, lo, there was the sergeant, sword in hand, riding furiously round a great brow or black hag, from which the country folk had been cutting peat. Nothing else was to be seen but a little whiff of smoke like the reek of a man's pipe, rising into the still air, and the red soldier galloping with the naked sword in his hand.

Then Raith cried also and galloped forward as fast as he could. But when he came in sight of the hollow left after the peat cutting, he saw half-a-dozen men, gaunt and white, in ragged, worn clothes, several still upon their knees, and some putting themselves, with muskets and pistols and scythes tied to poles, in some poor posture of defence.

Whereupon with sudden qualms Raith also drew his sword and rode about to get closer to his sergeant. Yet for the first time it seemed that he was working the work of wickedness. There was boldness of defiance in the attitude of these men, but that would have signified little to Sergeant-Major Grif Rysland, who, in the loudest voice of the exercise-yard, summoned them to surrender to His Majesty's mercy.

"And a long rope in the Grassmarket is the best ye can hope for, ye foul Whigs,—to loose off a shot at His Majesty's coat!"

The men continued to make what face they could pointing guns and porting pikes, but it is certain that the two dragoons would easily have shot and ridden them down. For indeed they were but thewless creatures, pallid with the damp caves of the moors, and so starved that they seemed to have eaten grass like Nebuchadnezzar.

One thing only stopped the sergeant from ordering and his subordinate from obeying. On the black brow of the peat-hag Ivie appeared on her beast, to Raith a glorious and surprising vision. The men beneath heard the trampling of her horse's hoofs which made the bog tremble, and, thinking they were being taken in the rear, some of them turned their arms upon her.

But she held up her hand.

"Poor men," she cried, "I am sorry for you. It may be that ye are the king's rebels, but times go hard with you. Lay down your arms, and I will see that no harm comes to you!"

"Ivie," her father called out, some little vexation in his voice, "meddle not in that which concerns you not. I am a King's officer—on His Majesty's service—I must do my duty."

"Your duty—aye," retorted Ivie, "ye are bidden to keep wide of all His Majesty's troops till ye hear the sea-mews crying about the Bass. What then would you do with all these prisoners, if so be ye could take them? Answer me that, Herr Reitmaster Grif!"

What she meant by Reitmaster the present historian knows not, but it was a name by which she often addressed her father.

Then a tall man, obviously a kind of spokesman among the covenanters, took speech into his mouth and cried aloud, "We hurt no man, and we fear no man. We are here to worship God according to our consciences! Pass on your ways, you of the Usurper's bloodhounds, and you, Madame, that keep company with such—we ask neither your good word, nor fear your ill. Between you and us there is a gulf fixed, which neither can pass over. Go your way!"

"And I pray you why?" cried Ivie, nettled. "Is there not the same God above?"

"Ye company with the slayers of God's folk—ye wear their colours in your hair!"

The pale gaunt man pointed with his finger. Instinctively Ivie put up her hand to her head.

"Is it not written," she answered, "in the Bible I see open there on the heather, that man looks on the outward appearance but God on the heart"?

"And what," cried Raith, suddenly finding a tongue, "what matters a ribbon of red to Him that maketh the darkness His pavilion and binds with bands of crimson the cloud of the morning"?

"And who," retorted the Covenanter, "may you be who speak with the tongue of a saint and wear the livery of Satan?"

"Have done with your prating, all of you!" cried the Sergeant-Major, practically, "ye crow like so many cocks and with as mickle sense. Ellison, there is riding of the hobby-horse with a musket tied to each foot for soldiers who speak before their betters. But I grant you yonder wench of mine showed ye the mischief of a bad example. But no more of it. Still, there is sense in what the featherhead says. We are here on a private errand, and till we are safe on the Bass we will serve Colonel Grahame and His Majesty the better by keeping wide of all authorities. Go your ways, then, lads. I would that ye could choose a better way of it and a more comfortable. I pray that I may never have to meet you in the way of business—set up between a firing party and a barn-end."

And with that the three rode on their way and left the poor lads with their whole Bibles and their tattered coats to recover their peace of mind as best they might.

Slowly they followed the stream down the long vale of Yarrow, and it was not till after they had passed a great old strength on a hill above them, that their last and greatest peril befell them.

The Sergeant-Major was riding down the path alone, Raith and Ivie a little way behind, when out of the slender covert and greening coppice of spring which grew all about, there rose a score of soldiers—footmen to look at, and English by their accent.

They swarmed about the sergeant and the other two with the maudlin familiarity which so readily becomes quarrelsome.

"Lucky dogs," they cried, "what a country is this Scotland, and what a maid! We are bound for Edinburgh, but for her sake would fain bear you company!"

There seemed to be no officer of any standing among them. Indeed they were little better than hasty trainbands, sent off to the North by the fears of the government to put down the first mutterings of rebellion. One of them, heated with drink, ventured to put his hand about Ivie's waist.

"I will help you down from the saddle, my pretty!" he said with a hiccough. "I know how to humour a dainty maid, I do!"

The next moment the red blood was trickling from underneath his ear. The sergeant's rapier had transfixed it as neatly as a pork-butcher's skewer and the man screamed with the pain.

"That will teach you to keep your hands off my daughter!" cried Grif Rysland, his face taking on that stony expression which Raith had noticed before in the quarry, and the black bar of his brows gathering ominously into a knot.

"Rein back, all!" he cried. "Get out of the press of these curs!"

At his words Raith and Ivie turned, and rode a little back. When they looked again the trainbands had bent their muskets upon them and were manifestly meditating mischief.

"You have wounded our mate," cried one who wore some uncertain badge of rank on his sleeve, "we will make you pay for that—in spite of your red coats to which you may have a right or not."

"I demand to see your officer," said Grif Rysland, sternly. "I will report the affair to Colonel Grahame. You shall be taught what it is to ruffle with his Majesty's Dragoons!"

"*That* for your Grahames and all such beggarly Scots," cried the Englishman. "We are under my Lord Towton and care for no other man except Captain Sibthorne."

"Nor very much for either of them!" called out another.

The matter grew manifestly serious. For a score of muskets were loaded and at full cock, all aimed more or less accurately at the little party of three. Any moment one of them might go off, and then what might happen none could foresee. For the first time Grif Rysland, whose temper was by no means sanctified, felt the awkwardness of travelling with a girl. Left to himself he would have charged the rabble and taken his chance, Raith also taking his.

But it was manifestly necessary to temporize.

"I ride on His Majesty's business," he said. "Let me speak apart with whoever commands among you, and I will convince him of the fact."

"I donnat knaw there is much differ among us," said the man with the draggled gold lace on his arm, "but till Captain Sibthorne comes back from the town down by, I avow there is none that hath a better claim than I."

"Come apart with me then," said the Sergeant-Major. "Leave your arms behind you—I will leave mine."

And so saying he delivered his sword and carbine to Raith, retaining however his holster pistols in case of treachery.

The two ambassadors now retired and conferred apart. Raith and Ivie were left alone. The girl seemed perfectly calm, and continued her previous light talk as if nothing were the matter.

She noticed the young man's surprise.

"Ah," she said, "you do not yet know my father. Why, I have seen him draw himself and me out of the grasp of twice as many enemies as easily as he will out of the clutches of these tipsy louts."

Her confidence was indeed rapidly and amply justified.

First there was a quick flow of low talk on the part of the sergeant—to which followed the exhibition of sealed papers, at which the envoy looked with uncomprehending respect.

Then the envoy ran back to his comrades, who, a little awed by all this parade, grouped hastily about him. It was not clear what he said to them, but it was manifest that they too were duly impressed.

Indeed they drew back to either side of the way, and saluted to the best of their several abilities.

"I hope," said the ambassador, as the three riders filed past, "that you will say nothing of this to our Captain

Sibthorne if you chance to meet him on the way to yonder town—Selkirk is the name of it, nor yet to their Highnesses of the Privy Council. It was but a few poor lads' jest—lads that would mean no harm—no, not to a dog, being at the time as far gone in liquor as there was liquor to sarve round, which to my mind was shameful little and a disgrace to the King's service!"

"Reason the more to bear away over the ridges and so shun the Selkirk road," remarked Sergeant Grif. "We do not want Captain Sibthorne to ask us any more questions on his way to report himself and his blackguard commando to my Lord of Liddesdale, who in the meantime loves me not because of that little affair in the Kersland quarryhole."

However, thanks perhaps to the detour which they now made, they saw nothing further of the English forces, officers or men, and indeed little of any living soul till they were within sight of North Berwick, and Sergeant-Major Rysland was inquiring for the abode of Sir Hew Dalrymple, to whom he had a letter to communicate.

Before he went off to seek Sir Hew, he had a word for Ivie and Raith.

"Colonel Grahame bade me take notice that he had spoken of me in the letter as one Captain John Grif, sent to take over the command of the Bass. 'Tis but brevet rank, but hearken, Mistress Ivie Grif, you will remember your name when spoken to, and as for the lad here, he had best hold his tongue in the presence of strangers as becomes a modest man and a gentleman private of His Majesty's dragoon guard."

CHAPTER TWELVE

GRIF TAKES COMMAND OF THE BASS

THEY went out to the Bass at midnight, Ivie wrapped about in her father's great cloak sitting beside the sergeant in the stern of the boat. Raith was in the bow, and each time that the waves jabbled and the spray lifted, he felt on his lips the strange salt tang of the sea. At the landing-place men stood ready to receive them, and as the surge heaved the boat up, they were deposited one by one on the black and slippery rocks.

And then the morning. Raith had never seen the like nor conceived it in his heart—the heart of a landward boy to whom "the sea" was but a word, or at most a mill-pond grown larger.

Instead of pathways over which the leaves met green and whispering—not a tree, not a bush, not so much as a bracken. Instead of coy waters heard long before they were seen, the rude leaguer of the sea waves beat about him. And far below and still farther above him he stood amazed at the abrupt skyward heaving of the huge hull of rock on which he stood.

The place had wanted a governor for some time, so the house, decently furnished and appointed as it was, had stood empty. Then it was that Raith saw Ivie Rysland in a new guise. White-aproned from shoulder to ankle, the strings tied about her lithe waist, light upon the foot, swaying willowy from the hips, all practical and equally swift to see and to do, Ivie was a revelation to him. She had early demanded him of the commandant for an orderly.

"We know him—he is a youth of his word!" said Ivie with a straight look at her father.

"And also he knows me," replied Grif Rysland with a smile perhaps less grim than usual.

But indeed it was this curious truthfulness of Raith's—more an incapacity than a virtue—which gave him so many privileges with Ivie Rysland and her father. Even when she teased him to "tell about herself," there was a curious melting in her heart as she listened. She knew that Raith Ellison would speak no word of untruth to curry a moment's favour with her. It might all be very foolish and very boyish, but she knew, nevertheless, that every word issued clean-stricken from the mint-die of his heart.

That is a great thing with any woman and inclined the girl to a certain favour, though she still continued to laugh at him. And her father approved even when he said, "Have a care, little one. The blade is of good steel, but it is yet untried."

Ivie gazed at her father with wide-open eyes, then laughing lightly, put out her hands and lifted up one flange of his huge black moustache. Upon the spot thus laid bare she deposited a kiss.

"The days will be shorter and longer several times," she said, "before little Ivie takes leave of her dad for any young springald with a curly pate! Do not be afraid."

"I am noways afraid," quoth the sergeant, "that is, for you—but the lad? What of him?"

"He?" cried Ivie, with mighty contempt, "oh, Raith Ellison does very well to wash floors and carry water. Do not take my plaything from me, I pray you, field-marshal—at least not here on this sea-gull perch!"

The brevet-captain shrugged his shoulders and went off down to the little fortress, most part of which had been turned into prison cells for the Covenant folk. It was poorly occupied for the moment. For some of its pensioners had gone to feed the fishes as the result (they said) of a sort of low prison fever prevalent during the winter, but more likely of the cruelty and hard treatments of the last governor. Others had been shipped off to the plantations in ships unseaworthy and unfortunate, only to perish on the rude coasts of the Orcades and Labrador.

The soldiers in garrison on the Bass rather sullenly submitted to the new governor's first orders. They were not of the regular military establishment recently brought to such a height of well-drilled perfection in Scotland, on the model of the discipline of the great Gustavus. Some dozen Highland gillies, the wrack of the retiring tide of the Highland Host, a few ex-turnkeys from the Tolbooth of Edinburgh, some veterans of the Magistrates' Town Guard, with a stray countryman or two, and some fisher lads from North Berwick and Tantallon, who kept a foothold on the rock to divert the supplying of victual for the garrison (and the sea-carriage thereof) into the pockets of their kinsfolk—not it is surmised without some ultimate profit to themselves—these made up the garrison of the Bass.

"A mutinous, ill-scraped crew!" was Grif Rysland's verdict at the first glance, "but faith of Saint Denis, John Grahame sent the right man to the right place. In eight days I will have them tramping up and down the rigging of this bespattered bird-cage as steadily as if they were marching across the Dam of the Amstel of a Sunday morning."

And so it was. But there were moving spells in the doing of it. At the first drill it seemed that there were never more than two-thirds of the men on their legs at a time. Brevet-Captain Grif knocked them down one after another, front rank and rear rank, right and left. If there had been a ball cartridge in any man's pouch he would have stood an excellent chance of being shot. But he had posted Raith a little way above with orders to blow the brains out of the first man who broke ranks or disobeyed a command.

After the ordeal the new commander explained matters.

"Ye are a gather-up of poisonous gutterbluids, as ever man saw. But we will do very well together when once we understand one another. I am sent here that ye should do my bidding—and that with great suddenness. Else will I heave ye one by one over the cliff. Ye will learn the quarter-staff exercise from me, and the singlestick. I will lounder ye heartily, front, side and rearwards. Then at the broadsword I will take three of you at a time, and tickle you one after the other in the short rib—or indeed where you will. Choose the spot and I will gar the sword's point find it out. Then as for musket practice, that we will see to also. Raith, lend me your gun. Look at yonder shag that holds its neck outstretched and extends its wings like wind-vanes."

The governor of the Bass took the gun, looked a little to the priming, and with a short aim fired, and the head of the bird fell off—the neck being cut clean through by the bullet.

"Yes," he said, as if resuming an interrupted lecture into which a somewhat foolish experiment had been interpolated, "it is well to practice much with the musket. It is the foundation of military service and here on the Bass we must not neglect it. Fall out, men. Set a guard, and see to it that the prisoners cleanse their cells according to the order. Do not behave butcherly and walk softly or I, your governor, will take order with you!"

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE NEW STOCK

So busy was Raith with his orderly-ship to Ivie Rysland up at the governor's house that almost he forgot the end and purpose of the present military establishment on the Bass.

A new joy, the joy of labour shared between two, was born in them. Or at least Raith found it so. Never had so much happiness grown out of the common details of scouring and scrubbing, so much conscience been put into the work of a whitewash brush, so much courtship into the act of chimney-sweeping. Fresh water was scarce on the Bass, but Raith descended and ascended as upon golden stairs to and from the white run of surf, bringing up each time double pails without spilling a drop. This served for all the operations which could be performed with sea-water. He seemed never in the least tired. A smile paid (and overpaid) all. The mere sight of that busy flitting figure too busy to talk, too engaged in the press of affairs even to listen—there was a community of toil about it which brought him nearer to her hour by hour. So at least thought Raith Ellison.

The house of Mayfield troubled him sometimes for a little, but the sight of Ivie beckoning him from the door step to make haste wiped the slate clean in a moment. All had always gone well at Mayfield. So it would now. And besides, had he not been disowned and outcasted? That ought to be sufficient.

Yet sometimes when the nights were calm he heard mysterious moanings and roarings from the caves beneath. Then he would rise and walk out into the grey and indigo night. Steep as a roof the island mounted away above. Equally suddenly it fell away at his feet. The sour smell of nesting-birds and dead sea-weed came to him from the right and the left. He knew that the cliffs lay that way. A solan goose said *K-r-r-r-r-a-a-a*, and instantly circumventing the isle with ten thousand *K-r-r-a-a-k-r-r-r-as* the light-sleeping gannets answered. Kittiwakes chattered like schoolgirls, asking what it was all about. The guillemots shrilly objected to being awaked, while all through the night ever and anon Raith saw a bird or two restlessly sweeping round and round the huge rock, looking for the egg which a rival had appropriated or which perchance had been pulled over the cliff by the bereaved mother herself as she clumsily cast herself into the void.

As the dawning came each morning it was Raith's duty to meet the boat which brought the provisions for the Bass from the shore—the fresh killed meat, the baked bread from North Berwick, milk from Tantallon farm, together with any letters there might be for the governor, the garrison, or the prisoners. All of these Raith of course took to the governor, who alone had the power of deciding whether a soldier might receive a letter from his sweetheart that might make him discontented in his isolation, or if a prisoner would be the worse for a lengthy epistle from "an old praying pious comrade yet out of bonds," or whether the said epistle covered, under its subtle harmony of phrase, any possible treason against Charles our King. A difficult task sometimes, but one that Grif Rysland attacked with the resolution to do the duty for which he was paid as if he were besieging a fortress in the Low Countries under the Prince of Orange or drilling the waifs and strays down yonder in the Castle of the Bass.

Of the state of mind of Ivie Rysland towards her orderly it is hard for a chronicler to condense any faithful account. Let it rather be judged by a conversation which took place between them one morning after the letters had been worked through by the governor and he had gone down with them to the Castle itself.

The labour of the house was mostly done. A space had been cleared and elaborately ornamented with paths. All rubbish had been thrown over the cliff, and the small garden in the hollow above set in such order as was possible. It was in this latter place that they talked together. They had been working steadily and silently till suddenly Ivie threw up her hands with a gesture of surfeit.

"Enough!" she cried, "sit down and talk to me. My tongue has almost forgotten the way."

She rested on a little seat made of driftwood brought from beneath and laid on the flat-cloven stones of which there were no lack on the Bass—rather, to be exact, fragments broken from the nearest cliffs with a crowbar.

"'Gallowa'" she said, "do you know that it is a full week since you looked at me? I should be glad to know what you mean by it."

"Mistress Ivie," said Raith, "a man cannot carry two pailfuls of water up a kirk steeple without looking well to his going. But, an it please you, I am most ready and anxious to make amends now!"

And indeed it was true that he looked at her steadily, especially at the eyes which were somewhat mischievously fixed upon him.

"You profit by your lessons," she said, "but I notice there is less about roseleaves and sunsets than of old."

"It was the sunrise—the little rosy flakes that mount upward——" began truthful Raith.

"Hush—hush," she put out her hand palm towards him, "never tell a twice-told tale! What think you of the prospect of spending your life on this black knuckle of rock?"

"I am very content!" smiled Raith as she sat with her elbow on her knee and her chin in her hand.

"And why?"

"Because you are here," said Raith, simply. It seemed very natural and even obvious.

"Do you know," she said quite irrelevantly, "that many would take you for a handsome lad?"

Raith flushed crimson but found no words to answer those mischievous eyes.

"It is generally thought an advantage to a man," she said. "As for me I am not so sure. I never mean to marry till I find a man like my father!"

"You have travelled far," said Raith quietly, "have you yet met any to match that model?"

"Never one," cried the girl heartily. And then rising she sighed, a sigh which ended in a yawn. She patted her mouth with her finger tips.

"Do you know you are very dull to-day?" she said. "Men should *do* something!"

Raith thought of the quarry-hole in the Kersland wood, and wondered how much she meant of what she said. But somehow he dared not ask her. All the same he resolved to practise the sword-play, the stoccado, the claymore, the rapier, all the newest tricks of fence as often as he could get the Sergeant-Major to teach him. He knew not that this was by no means what Ivie meant.

But he had no time to think the matter over. There was a crying far below down by the landing-place. Two boats had approached the rock all unseen from the hollow in which nestled the governor's garden.

"Ellison—Ellison," cried the sergeant,—"the new stock! They are arriving. Come down and help!"

Raith obeyed. Buttoning himself in his uniform coat and girding on his sword and pistols, he ran hastily down to the dangerous landing-place of the Bass.

He was in time to assist in bringing an old blind prisoner to shore. It was his father, William Ellison of Mayfield. As he did so he felt upon him the keen, shifty eyes of Beattie, and the quiet reproachful ones of Gil. Last of all there stood erect in the stern of the boat, his grey beard deep on his breast, the strange man whose regard had once before searched his heart. Mr. Peden said nothing till Raith, as was his duty, would have taken his fettered hands to help him ashore. But he refused, saying, "Off—off, Raith Ellison, child of many prayers, ye have now neither part nor lot with us." Then as if recalling himself he added, giving his hand, "Yet the Lord has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth!"

At the word the blind man turned.

"Who is this?" he cried. "Tell me, Gil. Answer me, Beattie?"

Gil was silent, but Beattie instantly said, "It is your youngest son, my brother Raith, in the garb of a persecutor. He is doubtless set over us here to torture us in our prison-house."

The old man turned sternly away, the chains at his feet and wrists jingling as he painfully began to mount the steep ascent.

"My son Raith—" he said with a haughty, set countenance, "I have no son Raith. I know him not!"

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE KISS OF PEACE

THE lightning had descended out of the heavens when they were bluest. Above on the hillside set in a little green handbreadth of turf, Raith could see the glint of Ivie's pinafore white as a sea-bird's wing. But even that was now altered for him. It could never be the same again. He had thought that in leaving Mayfield he was leaving the old life for ever. He had left the darkness—that which was darkness for him—behind, and in the light of Ivie's smile he had forgotten the past.

But here was his old life following with muffled foot. Shame fettered him as he saw on his blind father's wrists the manacles of the King he served. Gil's sad look was worst of all to bear. Beattie mattered not so much to Raith, save for the word he would send Euphrain, and Murdoch—and *his* mother.

There was one relieving thought. Three of those at home had escaped. Though three had been taken—three were left. The past in Raith's heart was not dead. Only the new thing in his life had possessed him utterly. Nevertheless he avoided looking at the patch of green far above as he ascended behind the prisoners and their guard. They were placed two and two in the cells by the governor himself, an old and a young together, that the young might help the elder, and do the necessary work of the dungeon. Gil and his father were together—Beattie and Mr. Peden in the last chamber nearest to the precipice.

When the irons were removed by the armourer Grif Rysland ordered grease of the solan to be given them to rub into the chafed places. Turnkey George Jex, a cunning old veteran who in his day had served against Cromwell, was trying to compel the prisoners to pay for this when Grif, returning suddenly and hearing the proposition, clapped George in a cell vacant for the day, bidding him buy his own meat and drink if he happened to need any for the space of twenty-four hours.

Not one of the prisoners took the least notice of Raith who hovered about, anxious in some way to ease their lot and his own conscience. But he was anticipated at all points by the governor, who having a soft spot at the bottom of his tough old heart was satisfied to assure himself as to the safe custody of his prisoners without adding to their pains.

"Who knows," he said to himself very philosophically, "who may be on top to-morrow or the next day? Man's life is but in his lip, as King Charles and his brother shall find as well as the chimney-sweeper. What, ho, lad, whither away?"

He turned and saw Raith standing gloomily at the corner of the regular sentry's beat, eager to visit the prisoners' cells but not daring to advance.

"What, man," cried the governor, "why so dumpish? You look like a calf that has lost its mammy on a visit to the butcher's."

Something moved within Raith, and he approached his superior as if to speak, but checking himself he remained silent.

"Why," said Grif, again clapping him on the shoulder, "brisk up, lad! I fear much there is some of the Whig left in thee yet. But these carles from the west will be well taken care of where Grif Rysland is in command. Aye, far safer, far better for them than to be running the muirs with wild Lag close at their heels!"

"It is my father and my two brothers!" said poor Raith, holding down his head and the tears coming to his eyes for the first time.

Even the bold black Sergeant-Major stopped short at these words with a kind of stun as if he had received a blow unexpectedly.

"Your father—and your two brothers! Ah, bad—bad!" he muttered to himself, "would that I had let the lad go his own gait that day with the cornet. Ah, well, (he concluded) what's done is past praying for. To your work, Raith! After all you have no business with the prisoners. Go and do my daughter's bidding."

Leaving Raith to march gloomily along the narrow path towards the governor's house higher up the hill, the governor himself continued his minute inspection. Water was provided in each chamber. It had not to be paid for as in time past. Also the small ale of the country was to be supplied to the inmates from the canteen at the same rate as to the soldiers. An interval for exercise was to be allowed them every day under suitable guard, and if so be that they proved tractable, and in addition gave the governor their solemn promise to make no attempt to escape, in time they might be allowed even the liberty of the Isle itself, which indeed one of the older prisoners, Mr. Frazer of Brea, had long enjoyed.

The Ellisons kept silent after this speech, but Mr. Peden answered the governor. " Sir, long have my bones lain on prison floors, but I shall thank you if, by your means, we are brought out into a larger place. Even though this be but our Isle of Patmos in which we are prisoned for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Yet God's word is like fire, and, like a hammer, can break even the rock of Patmos into pieces!"

Meanwhile the young man had plodded wearily up the hill to the erst pleasant duty which had so suddenly turned dust and ashes in his mouth. Ivie was still there.

" Well," she cried, " Gospellers or Hospitallers? Which are they?"

For by the latter name she was pleased to call the old soldiers and gather-up of maimed turnkeys who constituted the main part of her father's command.

But Raith Ellison turned from her without a word, going directly to his water-pails. Ivie gazed at him astonished, and then, with the woman's instinct which does them instead of reasoning, she came quickly to him and laying her hand upon his shoulder she said, " What has happened? Tell me! You have had some ill news. Is the fault mine?"

Which saying from her lips completely melted him, and indeed whom would it not melt? He could only stand a moment dumb and faltering. Then with a boyish burst of grief he cried out, " They have brought my father and my two brothers prisoners to the castle, and I am set over them as their jailer! Call you that nothing?"

Ivie stood aghast, stricken even as the young man. This was indeed no light thing, and there was no light consolation of words that she could offer.

" Your father and your two brothers!" she murmured, " they are in the prison below?"

He nodded, looking away out upon the flashing sea into which the solans were falling one after the other from a height, diving deep into the water, the white line of their passage being clearly discernible from the point of the rock at which they stood as if a great stone had been thrown into the sea.

It was in that moment and not when they were talking together that the first moving of the waters was made in the deep well of Ivie's heart.

" He has done this for me!" she said to herself, " what can I do?"

And the shade of a wrinkle was on her brow as she stood apart and said nothing.

"Well," she said at last, "perhaps it is for the best. Take a good heart, Raith. At least we can ease their most bitter pain!"

"They will not speak to me," cried Raith, "the old man, my father, denies that ever he knew me. Beattie, my brother, said bitter words, and Gil spoke not at all."

"How are they placed? In the cells I mean?" said Ivie.

"My father with Gil—Beattie at the end with Mr. Peden," answered Raith.

"Peden the Prophet," cried Ivie, "is he also here on the Bass? I have heard that he is a strange wild man."

"Strange," Raith answered, "aye, but they say that the word of his mouth is as the word of God!"

She looked at him curiously and then sighed.

"It may be," she answered, with unusual gentleness, "I have never learned such things!"

"And I have no right to remember them!" mourned Raith remorsefully, "I have forsaken mine own to serve their enemies. Now I walk free and help to keep my kinsfolk within prison bars—perhaps deliver them to the hangman!"

She went directly to him and laid both her hands on his shoulders. She had to look up a little as she did so, and it gave an unaccustomed air of pleading to her face.

"I thought," she said, "that you came here for my sake—to serve me!"

Raith stood balanced in a strait betwixt two.

"If you like," she whispered very low, "you can kiss me!"

He kissed her, and in that great moment the solid Bass, the heavens, the earth, and the blue circling sea span round about him like a flurry of sea-mews.

Suddenly moved by a sudden fright Raith looked up and Ivie with him. There stood her father, Grif Rysland, within half a dozen yards. The black knot was gathering ominous between his eyes.

"I asked him," said Ivie simply, "because of his father and his brothers!"

The dark knot disappeared. The grim man smiled. He knew Ivie's way. Or at least he thought he did.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

'LIKE AS A BIRD'

THAT night it was not Raith who lay sleepless in his little shelter-hut high on the great oval hulk of the Bass, a leviathan moored in the fairway of the seas. Ivie looked long from the little window which her father had bidden the carpenter, sent from the mainland to repair the provision crane, to set upon hinges for her.

Indeed, curious as it may seem, it is true that the great emotion he had undergone that day, even the dull continuous pain at his heart, threw Raith Ellison into a deep sleep, troubled indeed but still heavy and unbroken. As for Ivie, she listened to the vague, distant cries of the sea-fowl and the instant imminent assault of the waves far below. Sometimes there would be almost a hush about the huge cone of rock. Then all manner of little wavelets could be heard clapping their hands with innumerable distant laughters and nearer at hand, light musical sighings. Anon the caves underneath would take to moaning. The surges would rise and fall rhythmically, clinging a little and then letting go with a half-reluctant break and dash, till the water of some ninth wave roaring in anger zoned the gloomy boss of rock with foam and fury.

There were tears in the dark eyes from which erstwhile so many mischievous glances had shot forth.

"Why," she moaned to herself, "why was I left thus with no mother to guide me—a babe in a camp among men, my father's sword for a plaything, as now the fear of it is my protection? I would I were a maid of the hill-folk even, like that sister Euphrain of whom Raith tells me. She is douce, quiet, happy in saying her prayers and in believing. Would that I could be so too, in that way—in any way."

She paused a little, and as she looked up the stars sparkled myriad-tinted through her tears.

"My father loves me, but of all that he told me nothing," she went on; "he always said that I could go to church if I liked but that I had better not go too long to any one since then I could be of the religion of the man I married. Thus (he laughed) I would avoid domestic dispeace."

Though no one could see her she dried her eyes furtively on her kerchief.

"It may be so," she went on. "That is a man's judgment. It suffices him. He is content with his own heart and the pride of it. But for a girl—no. Her religion should be made for her, fitted as a gown is fitted to wear, to cover her, to be part of her before the world—to shield her from that—THAT!"

Ivie put up her hands to shut out the strange glimmering sea light reflected on the water, reaching pear-shaped to the zenith, paling the stars, which she took to be God.

"Oh, for some one to teach me!" she cried; "how happy are those who can believe!"

Ivie was right. A man may go alone, piloting his bark through seas perilous, taking his chances of shipwreck and ready to assume his proper responsibilities before all gods, but it is cruel for a girl. Grif Rysland had taught his daughter nothing, and suddenly she became conscious of the needs of her girlish soul. He had made her expert at fence. She shot excellently well with a pistol. She could read and write better than many great ladies. She spoke French perfectly, High Dutch well, and still remembered a little of the Low. Sergeant-Major Grif thought he had fulfilled his responsibilities. But now when there came something across his daughter's life, sudden, unforeseen, yet for which she could not but blame herself, the maid was troubled. She would have bartered all her beauty for the quiet serenity of soul of a white-capped sister of the Ursulines—aye, even for the grey hood and mantle of douce Euphrain Ellison.

The night wore on, and as it went strange and yet more strange things moved in the girl's heart. From the prison beneath there came, with the first flush of the dawn out of the east, the holy sound of psalms. Then, clearly audible, the cursing of old George Jex, disturbed out of a dream of free-handed prisoners and fat perquisites.

Yes, there was something in it after all. It was not only dourness and fanaticism, this standing out against the King and the King's officers. There was something else—something Ivie could not grasp, which put that rejoicing throb into the morning song of the prisoners. Ah, if she could but learn the secret. Slowly the dawn came up from behind the monstrous butt of rock. The sun unseen from where she stood at her window must at that moment have touched the horizon line, for swift as a thought, the shadow of the Bass sprang westwards. A vast cloud of sea-birds swept aloft in a wheeling cloud, saluting the summer day with a blare of trumpets—the high *cree-cree* of the terns, mingling with the hoarse *k-r-a-a-k-r-a-a-ings* of the solans in a pæan which only died away as the birds strung out in every direction on their way to their fishing grounds.

Presently she could see Raith, moving sadly about, beginning his duties for the day. She scented the sour tang of the driftwood smoke, and knew that he was preparing her father's breakfast. Her first instinct was to dress and go down to help him. But no, all that must be done with now. There was something she meant to find out—something that Raith even did not know.

And again from the dungeons on the cliff-edge the song of the prisoners came to her ear. It was their doxology, their song of triumph, the close of their morning devotions.

"The floods, O Lord, have lifted up,
They lifted up their voice:
The floods have lifted up their waves
And made a mighty noise.

But yet the Lord, that is on high
Is more of might by far
Than noise of many waters is
Or great sea-billows are."

No, she would not go down to Raith. The words were doubtless familiar to him. But she knew instinctively that of the root of the matter he was even more ignorant than herself. He was of her people. He had been dropped, the cuckoo's egg, in the nest of the hedge-sparrow, and the inwardness of these things was as much hid from him as from her father.

Dimly and far off Ivie began, not to perceive but to desire.

"Why had I no mother to teach me some religion?" she said. She even tried to pray. But she rose from her knees scorning herself. She felt as one that mocked at holy things. For words she had none, not even thoughts—only a vague yearning toward something not herself.

Poor beautiful untaught Ivie, she knew not that this yearning, vague, unutterable, not to be fastened down by human speech, is the true prayer—perhaps the only true prayer. So she arose dry-eyed and discouraged.

"It is not for me—not for me!" she murmured. "It is too late."

She dressed herself listlessly and went down. Raith was there, and he greeted her eagerly, hopefully, with the soul of love in his eyes. But there was a new thing in Ivie now. She put out her hand coldly, scarcely allowing him to touch her finger tips before withdrawing them.

"She scorns me!" thought Raith turning away. He had prepared her breakfast with an infinitude of loving care. But now he had no heart to wait even for the word of thanks which might be thrown to him as one throws a bone to a dog. Some terrible change had come over Ivie during the night.

The girl ate but little. She was at the door again in five minutes, looking at him busy with the axe, cutting up driftwood into billets for the fireplace.

"Get a dozen bottles of wine from my father's store," she said, "and also butter, cheese, barley-bread and dried mutton-ham. I am going to visit the prisoners!"

There was nothing for it but to obey. But Raith went sadly about his task. Though he was deaf and blind to the higher mysteries of his creed, he knew what the end of such an advance would be on Ivie's part. Nevertheless he was silent.

Down upon the Castle of the Bass, with its soldiers' quarters and its lines of little cells for the prisoners, there shone the broad even sunshine of the morning. A sentry stood on guard at a small side postern while another paced up and down in front of the range of cells. In a recess half-a-dozen men lounged on stone benches in various attitudes of yawning vacancy. All the days were hard to get through on the Bass, and the soldiers mostly smoked tobacco—except those on actual duty—in little pipes hardly sufficient for a dozen whiffs, which thus afforded them a semblance of employment by their continual need of refilling.

The governor had gone down to the landing-place to meet the morning boat from the mainland.

"Ha, what have we here?" grumbled George Jex, Turnkey George, in temporary command of the garrison. "Yonder come Governor Grif's wench and her lobster-backed floor-scrubber with a full cargo, bottles of wine—hams, provender. That is none so ill-done. There is more in the proud stand-off wench than George Jex had given the besom credit for."

"Lads, let's see!" said Maurice Tyars, an Englishman from Lancashire, "let a good-looking chap get on his jacket. I tell thee she is a wench among a thousand and doubtless will have an eye for a handsome figure. Out of the way there, Scotty, that I may slide the comb through my hair!"

The others, mostly old seasoned veterans of the city guard, laughed contemptuously.

"The best any wench can bring to thirsty soldiermen is not a well-fared face but what yon hullion carries in the basket—that is, a dozen of good sound claret—if two dozen were not better!"

"I desire to speak with my father!" said Ivie to the sentry.

"Ye will have to gang down to the landing then," said the man, saluting awkwardly. "Yonder he is waiting for the shore-boat and Lang-bodied Jock!"

"Tut, tut," cried the eager voice of George Jex from within as he opened wide the gate, "have ye no sense, Hob Halkirk? Bid the leddy pass at her pleasure and a welcome to her bonny face, I'm sure. It is ever a pleasure to see——"

"Put everything down there," she ordered Raith, "and go help my father!"

George Jex rubbed his hands and glanced at his companions. These stealthily counted the bottles of wine as if they had been a score of sheep. Then they undid a hole or two of their belts, resolutely but without ostentation.

"It's a warm day, mem," said George Jex, saluting again, "and it was desperate kind o' ye to think on us lads o' the guard doin' His Majesty's pleasure here on the Bass—weary faa' the ugly hulk o' it, birsling in the heat o' the sun on its bare barren rocks like braxyham in a frying pan."

"Pick up the basket of wine and the other provisions," commanded Ivie, pointing with her hand, "quick! They are for distribution among the poor unfortunate prisoners!"

"The poor—unfortunate——!" George Jex lost speech before achieving his sentence while the lower jaws of the entire guard dropped, in spite of the watering of their mouths. The wishes for the "poor unfortunate prisoners," unexpressed indeed in words but eloquent upon the circle of faces in the main guard, shall not find a place in this grave history.

"Be quick, sirrah," cried Ivie, impatiently, "or if you are too old and rheumaticky let one of the others do it—see, this smart young fellow with the love-locks. What is your name?"

"Maurice Tyars!" said the Englishman, lifting the baskets with a gay air. After all, she had picked him out. That was something—better perhaps, it might be, than many baskets of wine. Besides Maurice Tyars cared little for claret. He would rather have outfaced and vanquished a quart or two of right English ale. Ivie could not have chosen better. But behind her mutiny, black and murky, fumed and simmered, and as for George Jex he grew so purple with indignation that his companions soused his head in sea water to ward off an apoplexy.

They went to the cells. The prisoners of older standing took their mercies with quiet thankfulness. Though these came from a strange hand they were yet the gift of God. Did He not cause even the wickedness of the wicked to praise Him, and all things to work together for good to them that feared Him? So it was written.

But it was otherwise when Ivie came to the chambers occupied by the new-comers.

It was to that of Gil and his father—Raith's father also—that she went first. Ivie's heart beat fast. Raith had told her that Gil, quiet, still, grey old Gil had the heart soft within him like a babe's.

The door stood open when they reached the cell. Gil looked seaward, only the range of iron bars separating him from the sentry who walked steadily to and fro along the narrow terrace walk outside. The old man lay stretched on a pallet within. But his blind eyes instinctively sought the sunlight and he basked in the warm tide of air which set gently about the rock from the south.

"I have come," Ivie began, faltering a little, "to bring you something better than the prison fare. I am the governor's daughter."

Gil knew the girl in a moment but characteristically he said nothing. Gil's motto was that in this world there was trouble enough without making more with his tongue. But from the chamber adjoining came the voice of Beattie, who had been watching Ivie's progress down the line.

"It is the soldier's daughter—" he cried, "she who drew away Raith. Doubtless also she sent the troopers to Mayfield. She betrayed us. The blood of Murdoch is on her hands."

The old man William Ellison raised himself up quickly.

"Is it even so?" he said, "answer me, Gil. Is it the heathen woman?"

But it was Ivie who spoke.

"I know nothing at all of what this young man charges against me," she said, "it is true I am Ivie, the daughter of Grif Rysland. My father was ordered to this place to be its governor. He will do his duty by you as a soldier. But as a woman it is in my heart to make your lot happier if I can."

"Can ye restore me my son?" cried the old man, feeling his way with both hands to the door; "give me back my strong son Murdoch, whom your father's comrades shot like a dog at his father's gable-end."

"Indeed I knew it not—no, nor my father either," said Ivie, "we had gone away while all was yet quiet. If any misfortune has befallen, we stand clear of it."

"And the lad—the young lad, his mother's latest born?" continued William Ellison, "do ye hold yourself innocent of his treachery to his own? Was it by no fault of yours that he forsook his father's hearth to company with the unbeliever—the man-slayer, the malignant?"

"But I am no unbeliever, and I could not help your son enlisting in Cornet Grahame's troop. I saw him not till long afterwards."

"Ye are of the accursed," said William Ellison, "you and he together. Your net was spread—ye lay in wait for blood. Ye lurked privily for the innocent without cause. The curse of the Lord be upon you!"

"I have brought you wine and victual because He put it into my heart!" said Ivie, remembering her struggles of the night and gaining a little unhoped-for confidence.

"HE—who?" cried William Ellison. "Take not the name of the Lord into polluted lips! Ye know Him not! How should you?"

Ivie bent her head. There seemed no more pride in her anywhere. But she had not expected that it would be as hard as this. Raith, however, knew, and was thinking of it at this moment down on the black rocks against which the surf was booming and then bursting white, like bombs against an enemy's wall.

"Indeed, it is true that I know Him not," she said meekly, "but I would know Him if I could!"

"AMEN!" said a stern voice at her elbow, which made her start. It was Mr. Peden called the Prophet who had come out and now stood listening unseen.

"William Ellison," he went on, "lean not over much on your own understanding. The Lord's gates are not all front-doors. I have seen a thing that is surprising. Without doubt this maid bringeth ointment for the Lord's feet—spikenard of aspic, very precious. Set down the provend, my daughter. There awaits for you a stroke of the Lord, great and terrible. A mighty wind shall blow—a great judgment and a great mercy! But fear not, thy sins also shall be cast into the depths of the sea!"

He motioned with his hand and Ivie moved slowly away, somewhat exalted in her heart—Maurice Tyars, the Englishman, following her mazed and scandalized at the prisoners' way of speaking to the governor's own daughter. They deserved the cat-o'-nine-tails to his way of thinking.

The sentinel moved deliberately as before, his red coat showing against the deep steely blue of the sea. George Jex turned his back somewhat ostentatiously upon Ivie as she passed out. Down on the rocks Raith was struggling with a heavy load. Her father mounted briskly whistling "All ye Ladies." He was quite near at hand.

But Ivie was no more Ivie. A new thing had been born in her.

She took the man's meaning but partly—"Ointment for the feet of the Lord?" he had said. What could he mean? A great and terrible wind, a disaster! But after that—hope—nay, a promise from the strange outcast minister, whom even his enemies counted a prophet, that one day she should know—all that now she did not know.

She met her father on the steep ascent.

"Hey, girlie," he cried, "what do you here—among the soldiers?"

"I was grieved for the poor prisoners," she answered. "I brought them a bottle each of your wine—and certain meats, more palatable than their ordinary."

Grif Rysland made a little wry face at the mention of the lost wine. There was never overmuch of that in his cellar. But he was in a good humour and only bade his daughter hasten home, adding, "I must go into the castle, or that old thief George Jex will have every drop of your wine back into the guardroom!"

And in this he proved as good a prophet as Peden himself. He tracked George Lightfoot to his lair. He ran him down in the third cell where he was demanding Ivie's bottle of wine from its owners at the very sword's point. Without ceremony Grif kicked him twice the length of the terrace, to teach him (as he said) that his daughter's wishes were equal to his own commands. The prisoners were to be left alone—did George Jex understand that? Did the others understand? They had better understand it once and for all or he, Captain Grif, acting Governor of the Castle of the Bass, would be heard from. And then they would all wish that they had never been born—or at least that they had died in teething!

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

GEORGE JEX'S JUST PROVIDENCE

AND now there falls to be told something that hath been related to the reproach of Mr. Peden, time and again, in various books and pamphlets, and that too propagated as much by his friends as by his enemies. But seeing that we know the beginning and the end of the matter, it remains but to tell the truth, and lo! there is a new face on the fact.

It concerns the tale of that young lass who is said to have gone near to Mr. Peden's cell of purpose to annoy him, whereupon he being suddenly angered, prophesied incontinent that the blast of the Lord should blow her away like chaff. Thereafter walking on the cliff with some soldier-men, there came a great wind out of the heavens and blew her into the sea.

Which shows what bushels of lying and falsehood may gather about a grain of truth at the bottom of a measure.

But since the affair has been told with such seeming exactitude, and the printed papers spread abroad by flying stationers and packmen like many pearl-faced buttons and swatches of kerseymere, it becomes an historian to be particular also and to tell the tale as it happened, at once clearing the character of Mr. Peden and that of our true maid, Ivie, daughter of Sergeant-Major Grif Rysland of His Majesty's dragoons.

First we will show how the tale began to take its rise. Follows the truth step by step, as we have taken it down from the lips of those who had good cause to know and from the records left behind by men and women who lived in that troubled time.

* * * * * *

"And is it true that the poor ill-fortuned maid was blown from the top of Hughie's cliff into the sea and so drowned? Speak up, George Jex, since you claim to have seen."

It was the young Englishman, Maurice Tyars, who spoke, and the place was the main guard of the Castle of the Bass.

Old George Jex deliberately filled his pipe, stopping it down with the stubby end of his little finger all discoloured by thousands of similar operations.

"Wait a bit," he grumbled, "pipe-lighting and gossipmongering go not together. *Lento gradu* as my old comrade, the book-learned Captain Avery, used to say when we fought together against Noll, at Dunbar."

"And a fine job you made of it, you and your gossip Avery!" sneered the Englishman.

"Better than it turned out, if it had not been for such as them!" retorted George Jex, jerking his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the prisoners' cells; "the Preachers did for us worse than Noll's troopers."

"I was ever an enemy to extremes," he said, continuing. "Moderation is my word. Have ye heard of that book which was advertised to teach Politics and Religion and all the conduct of life? No, ye would not—not being able to read more than the dying confession of Captain Hind, nor caring for better. But I tell you that this comprehensive treatise contained but three pages, and on each was printed the one word,

'MODERATION.'"

"Bah," cried Maurice Tyars, "you and your Moderation. One would think we had all as much beer as we could drink here on the Bass. Is that beer? (He pointed to the bounding circle of the sea, now sulking under a cloud.) Why, man, we have hard work to make the cannikin clink with enough honest spring water, and you, George Jex, must come prating to us of 'Moderation.' Go on with your story, lad, if you have aught to tell!"

The other men were attentive and old George's pipe was by this time well alight. He began his narration.

"It was, as you know, on Hughie's craig. The lassie was there with her father and that long lobster-coated Whiggamore whose family we have shut up along there at the end of the row. You remember the day she came with the bottles of wine, and though the lads of grace got the claret—aye, and drank it too, their chief hands, old blind Ellison and Peden the Prophet, cursed her back and forth. You were there and heard, Maurice Tyars. Bear me witness."

"It is true," said Tyars, slowly, "at least some of them did speak to governor's daughter so as I would gladly have tickled them in the short-ribs with my hanger!"

"And ye heard the Prophet say that for her evil-doing there would come a wind from the Lord and sweep her into perdition, did ye not?"

"That I did not rightly understand," said Tyars. "I mind noan o' hearing owt about perdition. But the owd brid did indeed threat the maid with a wind from the Lord. That was why for it come in my mind that 'twould be no unseemly thing to lend him one on the chaffs. But she her own self bade me come quietly away."

"Aye," broke in the narrator, feeling the length of the interruption, "and her father kicked me, old George Jex, me that fought against Crommle before he was ever born or thought o'—kicked George Jex up and down sentry-go walk like as he were no better than a dog! Then I knew and said—ye heard me, that no good would come of it."

"Aye, ye swore—no man more blackguardly, George," said Tyars, who had his own reasons for holding George in check, "but swearing is the poorest kind of prophesying. Every man can do that on occasion. This garrison is hard at that sort of prophesying, day and night, fast-day and feast-day, Sunday and Saturday, from Yule to Christmas, and the odd day in leap year into th' bargain!"

"Well, at any rate," said Old George, falling back on his entrenchments, "the thing came to pass and I alone saw it. Sad it was to see a fine young lass that might have kept some soldier man's house tidy and warmed his Hollands a-nights afore he went to bed, after he had done his musket-carrying and biding in a fortress like a weevil in musty bread—ah, pity it was to see as George Jex saw it!"

"Ha done, owd mouldy," cried Maurice Tyars, "d' ye think a fresh young beauty like Mistress Ivie would ever ha' looked the way you were on, you forlorn, worm-gnawed, pock-pitted loomp o' shingle-wrack, fit only for the Black Man's bonfire!"

"Let George alone! Let him tell his tale peaceful," said another, "no good comes o' hard words between George an' you—not even one good batt in the eye. Ye are but tongue-threshers, both o' ye!"

It was some time, however, before George Jex could be coaxed into recommencing. But the others represented, truly enough, that they had no art or part in the Englishman's evil tongue and that anyway he but spoke after his kind, and that no better could be expected of him. At last Old George showed himself mollified.

"It came like this," he said, "there was the lass and her father the governor—that nice sweet-tempered, good-natured man with his fist clenched all ready to knock ye down if ye but ask him a civil question——"

"Let the governor alone," cried half-a-dozen in chorus, "he is out there with the boats searching every nook and cranny for his daughter's body. 'Tis not the time to speak so."

"It was a thundery day," George went on, "you yourselves saw it, those of you that were born with eyes in your head. Big white mountains of cloud, white as wool at top and with long black wisps trailing down over the sea like a woman's hair when she lets it fall——"

"George——" interrupted the Englishman, with his hands to his face.

"Go on," shouted the others, "hold your whisht, pock-pudding!"

"And these were the seven winds, all blowing different ways that come up with the thunder," George Jex went on, pulling at his pipe, pleased at his way of relation. "The red-coat ploughman was showing off his figure on the rocks all among the eggs and young solans, very daring. Mistress Ivie was running here and there to thrust her fingers into the fluff of the young half-grown birds, caressing them as if they had been so many kittens. 'Oh, what delights!—The loves!'—and so forth, with little cries and squeaks such as women use——"

"You lie, George," interposed the Englishman, pluming his moustache, "she had a voice like an angel. She could no more squeak than you could sing!"

Of this George decided to take no notice. He was now in the middle passage of his tale and the attention of his audience was absolute.

"Her father stood back, looking on from afar and doing naught as is his way. She was, they say, the apple of his eye, and they do affirm he hath spitted more than one man for her sake—great men too. (That is, mayhap, why we are blessed with him here.) So they stood, the three of them all on the edge of Hughie's rock when the gloaming was falling.

"Then all at once, as I was thinking of going home to supper (only that Sir Black-Brows, our honoured Governor, had bidden me remain where I was) I saw a black drift of cloud come swiftly over the top of the Bass. It was not combed out thin like the others but pointed like a distaff and it span. A wind chill and damp drove before it. I saw it stoop down upon Hughie's rock as if of a purpose. There came a flash and a great brange of thunder. Then when I looked again the maid was not there. But the dragooner, after running here and there for a moment, suddenly heaved his joined hands aloft and sprang into the blackness beneath where the sea was."

"George—George, you saw that?" they cried, "you are a great man, George. Why, you tell it like a printed book!"

"Aye," said George, modestly, "it is a gift—nothing more—many have remarked the likewise before."

"And what did the governor do?" asked the Englishman, "did he also go overboard after his daughter?"

"Not he," said George Jex, "catch him. He knew better. But he did what had far more sense to it. He ran down to the boat that lies above the landing-place on the wooden rollers. And on his way he cried to me to send him the fisherman and every man who could handle an oar—Scaly Harry, the Sand-eel, Whiffling Thomas—you know the crew!

"So off they set, but indeed there was little chance. The night had fallen by the time they got the boat fairly out. Happily the sea was calm enough in spite of the great wind-gust that had passed. They rowed away, and all the light they had as Whiffling Tom told me was one poor lantern, and now and then the flashing of the lightning that went and came away behind the Isle of May.

"After an hour they came on Lobster-back aground on a spit of rock, his legs and flanks all awash in the salt water, and sore battered with the waves—so they say. But of the maid herself, pretty Mistress Ivie, neither hilt nor hair was to be seen!"

Tyars heaved a long sigh.

"She had an eye for a well-made man," he meditated, "'tis a pity that it was not that red lobster ploughman if some one had to be drowned to fulfil prophecy!"

"Eh," said George Jex contemptuously, "and then you, Maurice Tyars, would have liked well to take over his water-carrying job up at the governor's house. Well, prophet or no prophet, it was a plain judgment, say I."

"Oh, George," said another, weak towards beauty, "you never do believe that that old prophet had aught to do wi' it. If I thought even so——" And he brought his musket to the make-fire in order to show what his intentions were towards Mr. Peden.

"Nay," said old George, "not what Peden said nor any of his sort. I believe nothing in that. But for all, it was a manifest judgment because of her father propelling a man old enough to be *his* father twice the length of the terrace-walk at the point of his riding-boot. There is a just Providence, I hold to it, though I don't pray all day like the canters we keep within there."

"Your Providence must be a just Providence," sneered the Englishman, "to blow a poor innocent girl into the sea and leave the man that booted ye standing safe and sound within a dozen yards!"

To which most improper criticism of his theory of fate, George Jex could for the moment find no retort handy. Nor indeed did he after find it by any amount of reflection.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE COT IN CANTIE BAY

It was true. Ivie Rysland had been snatched away by a sudden gust of wind from one of the rock-faces of the Bass. Raith Ellison had plunged in after her, and he alone, exhausted and quite incapable of speech, had been recovered. He now lay in the governor's house with a soldier to attend to him, while Grif with several boats and all the fishers and rock-climbers on the Isle continued the search. But it was already the third day. All hope had long been dead. Yet Grif Rysland thought that if only he could recover Ivie's body, it would be a certain consolation to him.

Even the prisoners knew, and in the cells there was much talk of the new marvellous prophetic utterance of Mr. Peden. What the guard thought of it we know already. Raith lay stunned and battered, still three parts unconscious, and Grif Rysland himself had not had his clothes off for well-nigh ninety hours.

But Ivie Rysland was not dead, and in spite of all that has been written, Mr. Peden neither foretold her death nor ever wished her any ill. The words he spoke to her were hardly less than a prayer, and who shall say that the old man's "Amen" might not have been the echoed rejoicing of the angels over a lost sheep at last well upon the Way?

Certain it is that at the time of the evening prayer, when all who could be spared from the guard were looking for the body of Ivie Rysland, Mr. Peden gave out and led the psalmody himself, a thing which he had never been known to do since his coming to the Bass.

And those who heard him say that the fervour he put into the concluding verse made all tremble in their bones. These were the lines:

"Even as a bird
        Out of the fowler's snare
Escapes away
        So is my soul set free.
Broke are their nets
        And thus escaped we.
Therefore our help
        Is in the Lord's great name
Who heaven and earth
        By His great power did frame."

And then the Prophet prayed. And though, as ever, his manner was mystic, and his words strange even to the most enlightened there (the "farthest ben" as the phrase went) there was in all he said clearly to be felt no condemnation, but rather a great pity and faintly emergent, even a certain triumph.

"Her raiment is stained indeed, as it were from the tomb," he said, his face turned upwards, "blood is on her garments. Nevertheless she shall no longer be called 'Desolate,' the daughter of the stranger, but her name shall be called Hephzi-bah and her land Beulah. For the delight of the most High is in her, and though she lose a father according to the flesh, lo, is it not written that the children of the desolate are more than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord"?

And after he had ended, none dared to speak or ask him any questions, not even blind William Ellison—so great a gale there seemed upon his spirit, and a light as of another world radiant on his face.

Meanwhile within little more than a couple of miles of the Bass, in a small house, a mere fisher's cottage, hidden round the point of Cantie Bay, the heights of Tantallon frowning above, sat Ivie in person, warm, dry, and comfortable, in face of two women to whom by snatches she told her tale.

"No," she said, in reply to a suggestion of the elder, "I will *not* send them word. There is much at stake. My father has seen good days and ill. His heart is staunch. He will only set his lips a little tighter and it will go harder with the slug-a-beds of his command. But he will face the trouble as he would lead his company into battle. I fear not for him. For the rest, I am delivered, and that suddenly, by a Hand Unseen."

"By the hand of God," corrected Euphrain Ellison, for it was she. As was natural, the daughter of the covenants spoke a little severely. To her Ivie was still more than suspect—the Strange Woman who had led away her brother. But Marjory Simpson, once more at home in her own Eastland, stilled her daughter with a look.

"Bide ye," she said, "He worketh indeed by the storm and all things are His servants. Listen! So ye may learn humility!"

"It happened thus," said Ivie, trying to think clearly. "I stooped to touch a bird, a little woolly fledgling that reared back its yellow beak at me, opening it wide so foolishly that I could not help but laugh. The next instant something black and roaring struck me, and I found myself twirling in the air like a withered leaf. Then came the water, a terrible noise and shining of lightning, and as it seemed—death! But when I came to myself I was not dead. I was in a boat and a man was giving me something that burnt my lips."

"We know," said Marjory Simpson, "it was Peter Paton's nephew, Long-bodied John, who found you. He goes every night at dusk to the seaside of the Isle. He has some traffic with the fisher folk, his kin among the soldiers, landing odds and ends that the governor is not supposed to know about, and carrying away the letters written by the prisoners."

"Hush, mother," said Euphrain, "you forget that you are speaking to the governor's daughter."

"I forget nought," said her mother, "I ken well to whom I open my lips."

Ivie nodded gratefully. Mistress Ellison laid her hand on the girl's.

"We heard that same night," she said, bending softly towards her, "how you had taken both wine and victual to the prisoners out of the kindness of your own heart. I thank you—aye, more than my ain man thank I you. For being of the east country I see differently. There is one God, it is true. But we look at Him with other spyglasses here in the east. Smoked they may be, but yet with them we may the better see His brightness unveiled. You have been kind also to Raith. And I ken that, whatever was in his heart as a young man (and when I see you, Mistress Ivie, I blame him not) you had nothing to do with engaging him in the troop of Cornet Grahame. For those who were in the Quarry-hole of Kersland Hill where your father slew the wicked Laird of Houston, sending him to his own place, have spoken as to that loud and often."

With a softness which was little characteristic of her, the good wife of Mayfield bent over and kissed Ivie. The girl impulsively threw her arms about her neck.

"Oh," she cried, "teach me. I want to learn. Perhaps I was thrown into the sea for that—perhaps they think me lost for that! I will not go back yonder—do not send me back. I hate the place. Bid these fisher-folk hold their tongues and they will be rewarded."

Mistress Ellison laughed a little easy laugh, a cheery helpful laugh which somehow all of itself lightened the girl's heart.

"There is no fear, little mistress," she said. "Long-bodied John and his uncle Prayerful Peter carry the letters every morning, as ye have seen doubtless, to the landing-place of the Bass. They do a profitable traffic in stores for the garrison. But neither of them is likely to proclaim that he was lurking with his boat under the north cliff at the hour of dusk waiting for a string to be let down by one of his fisher friends who had enlisted in the garrison for that purpose. For that there would be hempen cravats going, and for all his praying, Peter is not anxious to go to heaven that way!"

Ivie drew her breath more easily.

"Then I may bide here—and with you," she went on. "I have money—money of my own. I carry it with me. See! There was little chance of spending it out yonder on the Bass."

She pointed over to where the hay-stack apex of the prison-rock heaved itself above the nearer curve of the bay.

Euphrain, however, still held herself plainly aloof. She had something of her father's unbending ways, and could not understand her mother's ready acceptance of this daughter of the Philistines. To her it seemed like one of those deadly compliances of the people of Israel so often condemned in the Scriptures. She would scarcely have thrust Ivie through with a dart, but—there was a medium between that and taking her into one's arms as her mother had done. Ivie, quick to notice likes and dislikes, instinctively attached herself to the elder woman. But with something of her old carelessness she set Euphrain down as simply a little jealous. Herein, however, she was wrong. At least it was jealousy of no personal kind. Euphrain was jealous for the ark of the Covenant, and secretly resolved that only the elect should stand upon the bulwarks of Zion.

"We came here, Euphrain and I," began Mistress Ellison, as if feeling the necessity of responding to Ivie's confidences by making some of her own, "after Lag's folk had made a bonfire of the gear and plenishing of our bien house of Mayfield. But for years William and I had been expecting this, and he, as he often said, had his anchor within the veil. The whilk is this day a comfort to his soul. And for me, I had an anchor also, and I trust there was not the less faith in my heart that it was an anchor weighted with snug golden Charleses all in the safe hands of my brother Daniel, farmer in the Barnton Mains back there a mile or two over the heuchs. So as I say, we came down here, Euphrain and I. But we did not bide with Dan'l my brother, an honest man and a willing, though a kenning worldly. For not only did we not choose to draw attention and mayhap fines upon him, but if we could do anything to relieve or release the prisoners, it would be easier come at by remaining unknown and unspied upon, down here in this cove where none but small fisher-craft ever come, and where not a red soldier has shown his nose within the memory of man."

"Relieve or release the prisoners!" thought Ivie, alarmed by a sense of treachery to her father. But, in a moment she remembered that after all Grif Rysland was quite able to attend to his own business.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

IVIE CASTS THE GOLD FROM HER HAIR

THE house, the curious out-buildings and lean-tos occupied by Prayerful Peter Paton, lay in a little cove in the shelter of the great ruins of Tantallon, but cowering so closely under it that they were hidden from the observation even of the castle plateau. Neither could any part of them be seen with a spy-glass from the Bass, save indeed had any one mounted to the extreme pinnacle of the rock. But that no one took the trouble to do. Moreover no ships of any kind were allowed to take the inner passage (between the castle and the mainland) under pain of being sunk by the cannons of the fortress. Still more particularly, Prayerful Peter and his nephew Long-bodied John, with their kinsfolk on and off the rock, monopolised the supply of official provisions, in addition to which they kept up communications with the prisoners. For all which reasons no safer refuge could have been found upon the shores of the three kingdoms.

Thus Prayerful Peter and his nephew made the best of both worlds. None could equal Peter at "scaling the throne of grace," when he took the Book in his own kitchen or even at a house-conventicle when he believed himself wholly among his own folk, and liberty of prophecy was given to him.

And a better hand at a bargain, when it was a question of beef and beer for the garrison, could not be found nearer than the Canongate of Edinburgh. Governor Grif owned this much himself.

It was with infinite relief, therefore, that Peter Paton heard Ivie herself lay the embargo of silence upon him. He had spent a sleepless night thinking vainly how he was to explain his presence so close under Hughie's cliff at that forbidden hour of the evening. For Peter's converse with the Isle was strictly confined to the one hour when he could approach and the same period of time during which by oar or sail he must return to the mainland. His Majesty's prison of the Bass was shut to the world at all other times, and Prayerful Peter saw ruin stare him in the face, should his little evening employment be declared to the governor or even revealed to the soldiers of the garrison—some of whom, like George Jex, loved him not. He saw an end of all, and himself, Prayerful Peter, laid by the heels in the

Tolbooth of Edinburgh, to die of gaol fever, which, it was reported, prevailed extraordinarily there that year.

After Ivie had spoken, and paid over a private gold piece or two into his palm, all was now well, and Prayerful Peter Paton, a tall, loose-jointed man, framed as it were from oddments of different people strung upon wires, took across the mail which the courier had brought from Edinburgh and joined in the lamentations which he heard on all sides as to the sad fate of the governor's daughter with the most convincing countenance in the world.

His nephew Long-bodied John was quite different. He too was tall, and not particularly well made. He had a very long head shaped like a giant egg with the small end uppermost. Sandy coloured hair lay in an almost invisible thatch upon this, mixed with a curious mustardy yellow which seemed ashamed of itself, and tried to hide out of sight. There was a bristle along his upper lip like the down on the solan of a week old, and on his chin (as it were) the promise of spring. But his body was both long and thick, his arms thin like those of a crab with immense hands—deadly-looking murderer's hands,—the signification of which was belied by the wide simple smile on his apple-pudding face and the willowy spindle legs which, anywhere out of a boat, were always tying themselves in a tangle. But then, generally speaking, Long-bodied John lived in a boat. So that his legs did not matter so much as might be supposed.

A vague kinswoman, apparently equally related to both men, did very ineffectively the cooking, and slept casually beneath the back-kitchen table in true fisher-folk fashion. It was not long, however, that Euphrain and her mother supplanted her in most of her functions and introduced a new rule of cleanliness, something approaching that which had reigned at Mayfield. Whereupon the vague kinswoman, indignant, promptly quitted the cottage, apparently unregretted and even unnoticed by him of the Long Body and his uncle Peter. It was afterwards discovered, however, that they succoured her for the time being in an old fishing-boat, feeding her through the scuttle and bedding her down upon hay in the hold. Occasionally an extra-high tide moved her out, but she took her bedding with her and returned peacefully as soon as the water retreated. For the present Peter and John his nephew had no need of her. The cottage was, as Peter pathetically said, "just crawling wi' weemen," and Leeb was in the way. But no one knew what might happen, so they kept her against emergencies in the old fishing-boat. Why should she complain? A fisher wife could aye fend for herself. The which Leeb Paton did, entirely contented and far happier than in the cottage with its provoking tidiness, all the beds made, and every dish washed by nine of the morning. Leeb preferred the old boat, "Tantallon's Mary," to that, even if the tide turned her out every twelve hours.

And a wondrous change was wrought in Prayerful Peter's house at Cantie Bay by the three remaining women. Ivie's bright willingness began to win a little even on Euphrain.

"She works as if she were used to it," she confided to her mother. "I thocht bonny folk like that never put their hand to onything but their hair."

"Ye think her bonny then, Euphrain," asked her mother, with a shrewd look at her daughter, "in that auld gown o' yours that ye hae worn till it is threadbare? What for did ye not gie the puir thing your best Sabbath black?"

Right well Marjory Simpson, that wise woman, knew the reason. But she had her own ways of teaching and leading.

"What for no, mither," said Euphrain, indignantly, "think ye that I didna offer it? Aye, fleeched and pled, fair priggin on her to wear it, as if it had been a favour to me. But she would not. The old she would have, and a grey shawl and a blue band for her hair. If she had wanted to be as like me as she could, she would not have chosen different."

"Maybe that is what she did want?" suggested her mother. Euphrain shook her head suspiciously.

"Ye never can tell," she said, "there may be something ahint!"

For a moment Marjory Simpson looked as if she could have shaken her daughter. But she contented herself with saying, "Aye, Euphrain, ye are an Ellison—root and branch, head and tail, body and soul. But hear ye this, the clear spring water does not rin only that the Ellisons may drink it. Nor the sun shine only that he may licht the Ellisons to their day's darg. No, nor God bide in his heaven that He may bless only the righteous Ellisons!"

"Mither," said Euphrain, in an awed, almost terrified tone, "hae ye forgotten—there are Gil and Beattie and our father over yonder—and (she shuddered as she spoke) puir Murdoch buried under the ash-tree by the dykeside in Mayfield?"

"I have not forgotten," said Marjory Simpson. "It is good to suffer for the faith. It pays itself, even to the death. Have not I too my suffering? They lay in my bosom. They moved in my side. If all were dead, if all were cut off one after the other—all my own, still the Lord who gave and who took, put within me also a soul that can divide right from wrong. I, Marjory Simpson, wife of William Ellison, prisoner on the Bass, mother of Murdoch whom Lag slew, see the soul of this young maid struggling and distressed. She seeks the light—perhaps not your Light or mine, but *a* Light! Perhaps not our way, but *a* Way. Shall I trip up her feet and send her headlong? No, not though none were left alive to me nearer than the City of the Twelve Foundations. Do you your duty, daughter Euphrain, but leave me to do mine!"

Euphrain had never seen her mother so moved—hardly even when they brought in Murdoch to make ready for the burying. But now, what strange thing was this? Had the Midianitish Woman cast the glamour also over her? Euphrain went to her own room to pray. Yet that which she had offered in the matter of the Sabbath robe and mantle, and Ivie's refusal of them, had not been without their influence.

Ivie had wandered a little way from the house. The curious congerie of tarred huts, thatched and canvassed lean-tos, drying poles for fishing nets, drawn-up boats and rusty anchors lay beneath her. In a sheltered corner of the green cliff there were flowers, violets and daisies in abundance—further on in cool shadow a few belated primroses, cowering away from the east wind.

Without thinking, her mind being far away, Ivie plucked some of these and put them in her hair, where their pale gold colour showed against the dense brownish black of her coils. She hummed a refrain and then checked herself. But seeing Mistress Ellison standing at the door of the cottage, she hastily pulled the flowers from her hair and trampled them under her feet. They seemed like a part of her old life. For a moment she hated them, and then, Ivie-like, she was sorry. She picked them up again, and placed them carefully in a wet spot where a little burnie seeped its way down unseen to the sea, its path marked only by a streak of bright green verdure on the short grey fell of the eastward cliffs.

Euphrain, watching from her window, saw everything, and her heart hardened.

"She is play-acting to take in my mother!" she commented, and betook herself to the reading of the chapter which enshrines the story of the Prodigal Son.

Ivie came down slowly, looking wistfully over the sea behind the Bass which rose blue-grey against a white sky. There was a wistfulness in her eyes. Though her soul had waked and was bent upon the conquest of higher things, there was that in little Ivie which kept her very human, and her heart was apt to faint within her though it failed not.

Raith's mother waited her at the door. Ivie coloured as she drew near, a tinge that was neither the sun nor the fatigue of the descent. She knew that her hour was come. It was a difficult task she had before her. How would she acquit herself? She was going to break with the old life but she could not yet a while put on the garment of the new. She must carefully abstain from betraying her father. He had stood between her and harm, in so far as he knew. But he had made her scarce a woman among other women. She did not know them. She was going to put herself at the mercy of this woman, Raith's mother, who might hate her for the evil which folk said she had done her son.

But no! There was a certain pre-arranged harmony of spirit, a kindly gleam in those cool, deep, slightly humorous grey eyes—something to trust and hold to as surely as if Marjory Simpson had been her own mother.

The two women met on the doorstep, now clean and shining as a polished oaken table, of Prayerful Peter's once foul hovel.

"I have something to say to you," began Ivie, her heart in her throat.

"I ken," said Marjory Simpson, reaching out a hand, "come your ways ben, my bairn! I have been waiting for ye!"

CHAPTER NINETEEN

DRUM-TAPS AND THE PRIDE OF LIFE

"We will do well here," said Marjory Simpson, as she seated herself with her accustomed knitting in the great brown chair which had supported the wearied forms of many generations of seafaring Patons.

No common woman was William Ellison's wife. She was not comely with the soft rose-and-milk southerly comeliness. Ayrshire curds had never blanched her cheek. On the other hand, her hair was now silver-grey of an equal tinge throughout. There was a firmness of outline about her features, a sweet decision in the set of her mouth, perhaps even a snap of temper in her black eyes, now shining with amusement, now tender with pity. And little Ivie felt that if she did not speak to her, she would never be able to tell her trouble to woman born of woman.

Marjory Simpson was in no hurry. She talked of many things easily, till it should be Ivie's time—of the coming and going of the morning boat to the Bass, of the prospects of the crops as reported by her farmer brother, of Long-bodied John's last catch, and the best way to cook sea-trout. All this simply and with easy detachment, to let Ivie gather courage.

There was at last a little silence, designed on the part of Marjory Simpson. Ivie's eyes were on the yellow glister of the elder woman's bone knitting needles. Her own hands clasped and unclasped themselves nervously on the lap of the worn grey dress she had borrowed from Euphrain.

"I—have no mother," she said at length, her voice tremulous, "and to whom can I speak but to *his!*"

At the last word something stung sharp and sudden in Marjory Simpson's heart. She had not expected this. She had exculpated the girl, almost from the first. But she commanded herself and nodded encouragement.

"You love him?" she said, very low, her eyes on her knitting.

"From the first," Ivie answered also under her breath, "but he does not know. I have been hard to him. I am not fit for him. He is not fit for what I mean to be. I *have* told—I *can* tell no one but you."

Marjory Simpson ceased her work and looked Ivie fair in the face. The girl's dark eyes bore the look. In her heart there was no flinching. "Yes," thought Raith's mother, "she is telling me the truth."

She smiled—a smile of understanding and that rare sympathy which only comes into the countenances of those who in their day have kicked against the pricks.

"Go on!" she said.

It was easier for Ivie after that. She proceeded, reassured.

"I think I know why Raith Ellison went away," she said, gently, "may I speak of that?"

"It would be strange if the only two in the world who love him should not speak of him," said his mother; "tell out your heart, bairn. Be not afraid."

"Well," said Ivie, "this is it. He and I have been living in a dream, from which I have awakened the first. Now we must awake Raith. We must win him!"

"Is he not already won?" said his mother, smiling at her clicking needles but without raising her eyes.

Ivie shook her head sadly and sagely.

"No," she answered, firmly this time, "not yet! It is a disease of the young—I have seen it often. I have lived among it. Once too it was meat and drink to me!"

"What?" said his mother, looking up, perplexed for the first time.

"Drum-taps,"—Ivie answered, "the clarion that makes the blood bound, red coats, golden braid, the tramp of horses, marchings out in the cool morning, silken banners fluttering on the flank, the spell of a thousand men, a thousand horses moving as one, the gay life of men among men, the pride and the glory of life—that is what came upon Raith."

"Yes—I understand," said Marjory Simpson, slowly, "desirable young men, all of them princes to look upon, girded with vermilion, clothed all in blue, captains and rulers of the land—so has it been since the world began. These things have gotten into Raith's head and into his blood. I have long known it. But (here she smiled at Ivie) was it for these that he followed your father out yonder to the Bass, hewed wood and drew water, and last of all cast himself headlong from Hughie's cliff?"

Red and white went Ivie. She had been carried away by her own words. But Marjory Simpson's clear eyes thought no worse of the girl for having forgotten herself on behalf of her son.

"No," she faltered, "but there was also my father's advice which he gave Raith Ellison. For according to his lights my father, Grif Rysland, is a just man and nowise cruel. He saw the misfortunes that were coming upon Galloway by means of Lag and the favour he had at court and among the big bonnets of the Privy Council. So he took Raith with him to the Bass, that he might be out of the way of the evil."

"And that was all?" inquired Marjory Simpson, quietly.

"No," said Ivie, with Raith's own determined faithfulness, "it was not all. He came for me also. But—then, when he came, I, too, seemed to him part of the pride of life. And I do not deny that, having never known any good woman all my life, I was foolish. Yes," she repeated, "he thought of me as part of the pride of life he was yearning for—which was drawing him away from his own!"

"Say rather, my daughter, the desire of the eye," Marjory Simpson bent over and patted the girl's cheek, "and indeed I blame him little. Had I been a man——"

And as she knitted she laughed—a singularly uncovenanting laugh.

"Oh, you are good—good," Ivie cried out, "but oh, I fear you will not understand. I would so have loved a mother, if I had had one. But I have only met and known men. Good women do not come into camps and leaguers, and my father would have ordered any others who dared to speak with me before the provost marshal. His sword indeed fenced me about safely enough, and still more the fear of it. But the very safety made me foolish, light, overdaring. There were so many men, who changed and changed, coming and going like the waves of the sea. They told me foolish things also, at which I only laughed. They and their compliments were nothing to me. I was accustomed to them and the like of them ever since Grif Rysland used to ride me before him into the camp on his charger's saddle bow away down in the Rhine Province.

"Then on a day I met a lad, tall, fair, and as to his eyes, blue and clear with wonder. And at him I laughed also. But because he was so simple and—so different, I desired to laugh at him again. I had never before wished to look twice on any man, except my father. But this lad I wished to see. I waited for him by the wood. I knew that he must come that way. And indeed he came every day on the chance of seeing me, though I kept close in the green wood."

"He was my son Raith?" Marjory Simpson enquired yet more softly. The sting of the mother supplanted, was not wholly absent from her voice. But it did not remain long.

"Raith Ellison—yes," said Ivie, "and from a hoop of broom blossom which upon the last day I threw by chance into the road at his feet, many things happened. He has never told me all. I have never asked him, but I know that somehow he was made an outcast from his home, and that, in a fit of despair and the hope of military glory, he joined my father's company, and afterwards followed him to the Bass yonder."

There was silence for a little between the two women. Then it was Marjory Simpson who spoke.

"And what was it which turned your heart against that way of life? Tell me frankly—or how shall I be able to help you?"

"Indeed I can hardly put it all in words—I think first a disgust of man and men, and always men. To hear the same words uttered by this one and that other—all of love and devotion and service, of favours and gifts and sugared compliments. Of such I had long been sick. Then I heard the prisoners sing on the Bass. I considered their faithfulness—the gladness with which they endured hardness. Then one of them spoke to me—spoke pityingly and kindly. It was no more than a word or two, but then my heart only needed a word."

"And who might it be—that prisoner?" Mistress Ellison asked, with some faint hope that it might prove to be her husband.

"It was Mr. Peden, whom they call the Prophet," said Ivie, quickly. "And then all at once it came to me how much I was shut out from—having none to tell me of these things. I stood at the window of my chamber all the night and looked out at the stars and the sea. If there was a God abroad in the dark, surely He was so far away that I could not find Him. I needed God. Still more I needed a woman like myself, a mother. I knew neither God nor woman. So—so——"

Here her voice gave a very little quiver. She slid from her low seat upon her knees and laid her head on Marjory Simpson's lap. "Tell me," she murmured. "I will believe —I am ready to believe whatever you say."

Marjory Simpson was after all a woman of her time, though not wedded to the fierce extremes of her husband. But she felt the more the difficulty of the appeal.

"There is the Bible," she said, a little faintly, "that, you know, guides to all truth!"

"I have never seen one," said Ivie, "that is, except in a court in which my father once took an oath."

"Poor, poor Ivie!" said the elder woman, her hand upon the girl's head. Such ignorance appeared monstrous and incredible to her. Yet no one could look at Ivie Rysland's face and disbelieve.

"Did never your father teach you anything, or have some suitable person instruct you—any chaplain or curate even?"

"Oh, yes," said Ivie, eagerly, for she wished to do Grif justice, "I can read and sing, and play on the lute. I can fence, and shoot a pistol with any one in the troop. Also he had me taught to broider by the Sisters of a nunnery in Worms——"

"But religion—God?" Marjory Simpson's voice sank to a hoarse whisper.

"I never heard either named save with an oath!"

Marjory Simpson gave a little gasp. It was terrible, incredible. Yet here was a virgin page on which she must write.

"You will tell me all—all?" pleaded the girl. The elder woman nodded.

"Little by little," she said, "for to-day let it be enough for you that there is one woman in the world to whom you are as her own daughter, and for the rest" (here she reached for her little red-bound Bible in one volume, printed in Edinburgh by the Printers to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1633)—she turned the leaves and found a place—"Take but this one word with you, my bairn. Ye have not far to seek. There is no need to look out of your window at the stars. The blasts of wind may have been His ministers, to bring you hither, but God is not in the wind. Read the word."

And Ivie stooped and read from the small clear type these words, "*Neither shall they say, Lo here, or lo there! For the Kingdom of God is within you!*"

"But how am I to know it is for me?" pleaded Ivie dolorously, looking up into the firm strong face.

Marjory Simpson took the girl in her arms. "By this," she said, "that your heart has brought you to me, and that your best desire is to bide with be. Go your ways, bairn. Be comforted. God is within you. I would we could all say as much."

Still, however, Ivie lingered.

"There is one thing more," she murmured, uncertainly, "you are not angry with Raith?"

His mother smiled through the welling moisture in her eyes. She signified "no" with a little shake of the head.

"Then," said Ivie, "would it do any harm if we kneeled down and prayed that He would give him back to the two women who love him?"

So these two prayed together, and on his Isle, Raith sat with his chin on his hands looking out over Hughie's fatal craig and feeling that for him the world was ended indeed.

CHAPTER TWENTY

PRAYERFUL PETER AND LONG-BODIED JOHN

PRAYERFUL PETER PATON and his nephew Long-bodied John sat up among the heuchs in the mouth of a little cave hidden under the ancient Castle of Tantallon—a cave which, though not large, was singularly useful to the pair. All about lay dried tobacco, coils of rope new and strong, some with large knots at intervals, some made up into ladders, lighter ropes with grappling clutches of three-pronged steel, guns, pistols, and other unlawful engines. In a corner by itself was a Bible, well-thumbed from cover to cover. For Prayerful Peter only disobeyed the laws of the land that a greater good might come, first to his own pocket and secondly to the Good Cause, the first having perhaps more weight with him.

Both men lounged sailor-fashion on weighty packages of some fabric closely enough packed to fit easily to their figures and make a sufficiently comfortable couch.

"Certes," said Peter to Long-bodied John, "but it's a queerie thing what landward women-folk will set themsel's to do. The kitchen doon yonder is for a' the world like a scoured pot! Never a place where a man can kick aff his sea-boots, or gut a dozen fish! And a' because, my fegs, a thing maun be clean! *Clean*—what signifies *clean?* If it werena that it was for the Lord's cause, an' we had this bit cave up here to lie amang the tobacco and Hollands, the fish and the French lace, and if I werena weel payed for it in guid yellow gowd, I declare I wadna hae the besoms o' destruction in my house for a day! But we maun aye follow the leadin's o' Providence, ye ken!"

"Humph," said Long-bodied John, with some surliness, "I see nocht the maitter wi' the lass that fell ower Hughie's craig!"

His uncle stared at him in wonder.

"Maybe," he said at last, "maybe sae. Aye, Jock, ye are maybe richt."

Peter could noways afford to quarrel with his nephew, who for so little money bore the burden and the heat of the day—often of the night also. Prayerful Peter was not fond of putting his own neck in peril, but he was by no means averse to Long-bodied John doing so. Affairs were equalised in this way. For if John were hanged, Peter would get nothing but a sea-suit or two, which in a manner of speaking were his already. While if he, Prayerful Peter Paton, stretched his neck in the hangman's tow—still more, if he died a natural death, John his nephew would heir all that he had.

All the same Peter did not desire family strife. That his nephew should do his errands, when they were of a dangerous nature, suited him very well.

"Aye," he repeated, "ye are dootless richt, John. I hae noticed mysel' that she is no that very particular. I saw her gaun ben wi' dirty shoon yesterday! That was aye something!"

"Humph," grumbled John of the Long Body, "but she wae oot wi' them again in five minutes. I ken. They will mak' the puir thing as clean as themsel's, if ye let them bide thegither!"

"Dootless, John, ye ought to ken aboot the lassie's shoon," said his uncle, "for I saw ye cleanin' them yoursel', your elbow fleein' as fast as if ye had been baitin' a trawl. Oh John—John—be guided by your auld uncle. Be warned by him. Aince was I marriet, and it near ruined me. It was lang syne—afore ye war born. She was a farmer's dochter, up ayont there. I had to sell a boat to get her faither to tak' her back—an awesome sum that whiles makes me wauken up in a cauld perspiration in my bed to this very day, thinkin' that I hae to pay it ower again!"

"And what," inquired John, "was the lassie's faut?"

"Oh," said his uncle, waving his hand down in the direction of the cottage, "just freits like yon. Whitewash to the riggin, within and withoot! No a rest for the sole o' your fit—your verra claes compleened o'—nae rest in your bed. She wondered how I could bear to be sae dirty, wi' that muckle guid sea-water at my verra door! And I telled her that I had never been washen since the howdie did it, as far as I kenned, and that it wad verra likely kill me. But she juist said, unfeelin' like—'Kill awa, then, Peter. But ye dinna come into my hoose, smelling like a dozen auld fish-creels!' Oh, tak' warnin' in time, John (his uncle continued, helping himself to a bite of tobacco from a large lump which was lying to swell in a pail adjacent), when ye mairry, tak' a fine strappin' fisher-lass that has smelt o' last year's herrin' ever since they were oot o' the nets, and wadna care gin the hoose was piled hand-high wi' net's an' bait, and the riffle-raffle o' boats' riggin smellin' o' a' the fish i' the sea, frae the sand-eels that ye howkit for late yestree to the blubber o' the whale that was cast up on Black Point Martinmas come a twalmonth!"

Nephew John wiggled his long body and privately blasphemed his uncle. He too could be prayerful, but not aloud nor yet very orthodoxly.

"Ye are a silly auld deevil," said he, aloud, standing in no awe of his kinsman. "Your noddle has surely eneuch to do contrivin' ploys for me to carry through. Let my affairs alane. Wha was thinkin' o' marriage? I hae never passed half-a-dozen words wi' the lass in my life!"

"A man wi' a figure like yours, John, has little need o' words," urged his uncle, insidiously, "forbye, did ye no save the lass frae a watery grave? Will she no be gratefu' for that, think ye?"

"Gin ye caa linkin' a boat-huik amang her duds and hoising her into the boat like a smuckle cod—if ye caa that *coortin'*—weel, I did that. It's a peety the lass kenned naething aboot it, till she was in the hands o' yon twa weemen doon there and lyin' in her warm bed!"

Then all at once he seemed to repent himself. It had not been the habit of the two men, who knew each other's characters and failings, to have any reticences with each other upon points of gravity.

"I'm no denyin'," said John with a certain hesitation, "that the craitur's bonny—aye, that she's the bonniest lass that ever I saw——"

"Wheesht, wheesht, John," said his uncle, "them's no canny words, and ye will maybe be vexed for them, should they come to her lug. She micht haud ye to them afore the ceevil magistrate, ye ken. It's an awesome easy thing in this country for a man to get saddled wi' a wife! and ye ken, Jock, ye michtna get rid o' her as easy as me—her faither bein' a big man amang the rulers o' the land, and, moreover, ye hae never a boat to sell to pay the scaith-dues, as was my guid fortune in the hour o' my distress!"

"Peter," said Jock, contemptuously, "ye are cleverer than me—I own that. But whiles, man, ye show nae mair sense than a whelk. Do ye no see that the lass is bonny far ayont a' the leddies that come here wi' the great folk—bonnier than Leddy Dalrymple hersel'—aye, though she is but dressed plain in an auld gown that no a fisher lass within sicht o' Berwick Law wad put on her back? But she canna help bein' bonny onymair nor a sawmon troot! Did ever ye see her smile, uncle?"

"Smile?" grunted Peter Paton, who did not like being compared to a whelk even by his faithful partner, "whatna fairlie's that?—A smile? I never heard tell o' ony siccan thing! Does it grow on a bush?"

And indeed smile is not a Loudon word.

"It's juist when a body laughs withoot makkin' a noise!" explained his nephew.

"Like this," said Peter, showing his gums and some tobacco-stained ruins of teeth.

"That," said the contemptuous John, thinking of Ivie, "that's never a smile, man, Peter! That's mair like a cat when the dogs corner her and there's no a tree handy —or (hitting a new local comparison) like a monkfish lying on a gravel bottom wi' his mouth open waitin' for the fry to come ben!"

"If ye canna be civil, Jock," said his uncle, "I'll gang doon to the boat, and leave ye to your fate. Smile yoursel' then, and let us see—you that's sae clever!"

Long-bodied John endeavoured to achieve an imitation of Ivie's smile. His uncle watched with a fine critical scorn.

"Hum," he said, "maybe I was like a monk-fish waitin' for his denner, but ye are for a' the warl' like a hen's egg split across three-quarter way doon!"

Long-bodied John rose to his feet. It was his time to be hurt in his feelings.

"I thocht I heard ye say,"—he spoke with biting sarcasm,—"that ye were gaun doon to pit a stroke or twa o' wark on the boat. I'll e'en gang mysel' to watch ye. The puir auld thing wad be that astonished, if ye did a hand's turn on her, that she wad fair break sindry wi' the surprise —just like the hen's egg!"

So uncle and nephew parted on mutually bad terms. Thus, remotely, often unconsciously to herself, must one "seek the woman" in any quarrel of man.

Women and dead men's wills do more to divide man from man than creeds, religions, politics, business, all the scuffle and shouldering of life.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

O THOU DECEITFUL TONGUE!

On the Bass things went otherwise. A dull despair sat close on the heart of Raith. Often he wished that he had never been recovered out of the water. He even thought of throwing himself again from the cliffs. But something, perhaps gleaned unconsciously from his early education, restrained him. Besides, so long as his father and brothers remained, there was work for him to do at the Bass.

Since Ivie's disappearance Grif and he had stayed down at the Castle. For the governor, finding an oppression in the house which had been made clean and fair by Ivie's hand, resumed his old garrison habits and bedded like the men, only in a place apart, while Raith slept across the doorway within. There was, he knew, bad blood among the soldiers. And some night by mistake a musket might be protruded through the door, and Grif Rysland's brains blown out as he lay asleep. The like had been done before. So Raith, who had transferred his devotion from the daughter to the father, locked the door of their lodging with his body. The governor would have slept in peace in any case, but he thought none the less of the young soldier's fidelity, and occupied much of his spare time (which on the Bass was not little) in teaching him sword-play and all manner of soldierly accomplishments in the little hollow of the governor's garden, placed high on the cliff above the fort.

By instinct both of the men kept silence concerning that which had happened. Ivie's name was never mentioned between them. They even avoided each other's eyes as zealously as they sought each other's society.

Raith's vigilance was by no means superfluous. Among the riff-raff of prison-jacks and ruffian turnkeys who were thought good enough to garrison the Bass in time of peace and hold the prisoners in respect, Grif Rysland, accustomed to the perfect discipline of military establishments, and swift with his punishments, was hated almost insanely. Of course George Jex was at the head of any conjuration. But there was to be no sand-bagging, no musket-balls fired point blank in the dark. George made that clear. Bodies had such an awkward way of turning up, and a Governor of the Bass could not go amissing over the cliff as an ordinary soldier might. No, they must hit upon something else.

But it was a long time before they did. And indeed had the matter rested with themselves, it might never have been accomplished. There were not enough brains among the gang to entrap a Tammie-Norie. But on the other side of the bars were better brains. All who lay in His Majesty's prisons for conscience' sake were not of the true blue, any more than were all who wore the red coat bloody persecutors.

Time and again Beattie Ellison inclined a curious ear to the talk of the sentries as they passed and repassed. In fault of better, Old George had been made a kind of inspecting officer, and he used his opportunities to talk matters over quietly at the end of the terrace beat, where it overhung the sea, with the sentinel of the night. Hatred of Grif—"Captain Grif," they called him, was ever the mainspring of the talk—oaths and foul language their mode of expressing it.

"If only we could find something against him to write to the Council," they said, "the letter would not need to be signed. They take up all sorts of complaints there. We could give it to one of the fishermen—Hughie Allister, perhaps. But Captain Grif is a good soldier, though here he is a black tyrant, and on the Isle of the Bass 'All-Hell-let-Loose'!"

It was by this latter significant name that these men referred to him between themselves, and under their breaths—offscourings and maligners by nature, for the first time brought to book by the iron hand of Grif Rysland.

To all this Beattie listened with eagerness. For one he had had enough of the Bass. Peden, the Prophet, wearied him out of patience with his groans and bewailings. Sometimes he thought that he could have strangled him when he kept him awake at nights, praying for "poor distressed Scotland," and by long-drawn anticipations of the yet bloodier days that were in store for her before the fall of the Great Gloaming, preceding the night in which God should speak, and at His voice all the persecutors and malignants vanish forever away, and the Morn of final Peace dawn over a distracted land.

The reason was, Beattie had not the root of the matter in him. So much Mr. Peden had long ago divined, even when he had seen him for the first time in the house-place of Mayfield. Now the Prophet completely ignored him, not even answering when he spoke, nor allowing him any part in the continual services and "sweet spiritual singings" with which the prisoners solaced their empty days.

Small wonder that the Bass soured on Beattie's stomach. It was well enough for a little when there was hope of a speedy deliverance, and immortal fame ever after, as one who had suffered at the hands of the persecutors in the same cell with that Prince in Israel himself, Mr. Alexander Peden.

Beattie Ellison remembered, too, that there were many good and faithful men quietly living in Edinburgh, in Glasgow, and in Aberdeen, indulged by the Government—either for the quietness of their demeanour, the silence of their tongues, or (so it was whispered) because they had been able to do some signal piece of service to the King. What the nature of such service might be was always kept secret, to encourage others to do likewise.

Now, the governor of the rock was not hated by the prisoners as he was by the men of the guard. Though a "strict officer," he allowed them as much liberty as he judged possible or prudent. Each day half-a-dozen of the most amenable were allowed to wander over the Isle at their pleasure, with only Raith and another with them. Or, if the batch included any of the Ellisons, Raith was left at home. Then, not infrequently, the governor took the duty himself, along with the Englishman, Tyars, or some other of the guard detailed for the purpose.

It chanced that on one of these excursions, naturally very dear to prisoners cooped so long within narrow cells, Beattie made a point of lagging behind with old George Jex. He had something particular to say to him—a bargain which they must strike and to which they must both adhere. Beattie did not mean to give his knowledge for nothing—indeed not for anything less than pardon and freedom. But in his design he felt that he must have the backing of the soldiers of the garrison before he could strike for liberty. They would help him—he them. Neither could do without the other.

There was a covert ability about Beattie Ellison. On a lower level and of a meaner sort, it was the same which had conducted James Sharp to the arch-diocese of St. Andrews. Some Latin he had taken up at the village school from Robert Melrose, the old school-master and grammarian, and the ministers who visited his father's house had taught him enough Greek to spell out the plainer narratives of the New Testament. Beattie was cunning, secret, and untiring. At home his chief desire had been to bring disgrace upon his youngest brother. Having succeeded in this, he judged that it would be for his good to pose as a sufferer. But a month or two of the hard floors and scanty fare of the Bass had completely cured him of this. "I have something to say to you," he said, secretly, as George Jex, who, his musket on his shoulder, slowly waddled with many blasphemies up the steep ascent of the Isle.

"Hang me if I have aught to say to you," growled Jex, "only that if you will stop that prophet of yours from groaning all night, I will have double rations served out to you. That I promise on my faith. No one can sleep for him, and the lads are ready to draw cuts which should put the wizard out of his pain with a silver button in his wame!"

"You do not love your governor?" said Beattie, softly. George Jex brought his weapon to the ready with his finger on the trigger.

"Who says so—who dares to say so?" he exclaimed.

"I know—I have heard you say so yourself," Beattie answered, no whit put out.

"You have heard me—you?"

"Yes," said Beattie, "when you were walking with the sentries."

"Then, young man," said Old George, "it strikes me that your days are numbered. You have heard too much, and your cell is convenient to the cliff."

"I judge not so," smiled Beattie, "for I know that about your governor, which, if told to my Lord Liddesdale, would suffice to rid the Bass of him for ever. And I doubt not, that, rightly represented as, being a scholar, I could represent it in writing, the post would be given to you!"

"And why?" demanded Old George, suspiciously, "why should you wish to do me a good turn and spite Governor Grif, who has been so favourable to you Whiggamores out of the West?"

Beattie leaned towards the sour-faced old man, glancing ostentatiously to this hand and the other to make sure of not being overheard.

"Because," he said, "I hate *him!*"

And he pointed with his hand to the figure of his brother, which was clearly relieved against the white sky of noon. The governor stood beside Raith Ellison, and the two seemed in deep and intimate converse together.

"I see," said George Jex, slowly, "by striking one you would hit the other. It is true. I would make short work of the Red Dragoon if I were governor of the Bass!"

The voices of these two worthies sank to a whisper, and in a few minutes they fell apart, as the governor turned sharply about to keep his eye upon all his prisoners. Beattie regained his cell without uttering another word, but that very night, Old George, himself on guard, left his lantern hanging for a couple of hours, on a nail above the little grating of Beattie's cell. Within, Peden the Prophet prayed while his companion wrote page after page, putting each into his bosom as it was finished.

And the burden of the Wise Man's prayer was indeed that of a true prophet!

> "Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue!"

And this he repeated time and again.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

DUKE JAMES AMUSES HIMSELF

THE letter which Beattie Ellison wrote in his cell by the light of Old George's lantern, while Mr. Peden prayed, was to this effect:

"To the Most Honourable the Members of the King's Privy Council at Edinburgh—the Information and petition of Beattie Ellison of Mayfield in Galloway, presently in the prison of the Bass for supposed disloyalty to the King's Majesty, the contrary being the case. The said Beattie Ellison has suffered many things from his family because of his attachment to the government and his desire to live peaceably according to the law. His brother, Raith Ellison, is at present a soldier in the King's service, and is even now upon the island of the Bass.

"If the honourable Council will summon the writer before them, he can give them valuable information with regard to the man calling himself Captain Grif—being a foreigner of the name of Rysland, and a Dutch spy. He is at present being searched for, because of a cruel murder committed by him upon the body of one of His Majesty's most faithful servants and officers. He is also secretly a rebel. He grants to the prisoners under his charge many privileges, more even than to the faithful soldiers of the guard (who will support this appeal by a further petition to the same effect). He permits these traitors to roam over the Isle at their will, besides supplying expensive victual and French wines to them at His Majesty's expense—to all of which the aforesaid B. E. will speak more at large before the Honourable Council if, in its great wisdom, an opportunity is afforded him."

The turnkey's petition was shorter, but equally to the point.

"The garrison of the Bass to the Privy of Edinburgh.—This is to inform Privy that the man called Capt. Grif treats us shameful, kicking and lashing without reason. He is no Captain but a common soldier sent away for ill-doing out of the south country. He is also a rebble, and said three times that he would strangle our worthy corpral and sub-commander, George Jex, who fowt very valiant for the King's father against the Usurper Crommle. Guvernr Grif swore also many times by the blood of the King, which shows that he was art and part in a plot to murder the King, as is clear to all here. Hoping that you will take order with this fals traitor Grif, and give us a new Governr —such as has fowt again Crommle and is ready to fight again against all Tyrants and Usurpers whatsoever.

"IN NAME OF THE GARRISON OF THE BASS."

To this vigorous epistle no personal signatures were appended, but there was no need to be particular. George Jex had signed it all over.

Both these documents were given to the fisherman Allister, and were carried to shore and despatched by a sure hand to Edinburgh, by means, indeed, of the unconscious nephew of Prayerful Peter—who, had he suspected what he was carrying, would undoubtedly have sunk the packet in the sea. But, coming from the usual covenanting quarter and dropped into his boat at the hour of dusk by the confederate on the cliffs above, all passed without suspicion, and the double missive sped on its way.

But underground mines sometimes work not altogether according to expectation. There is something the matter with ths fuse. The explosion happens too soon or too late, or the powder is damp.

Now His Majesty's Privy Council for Scotland was at this time a body singularly nervous and touchy. More than once it had taken up allegations against one of its own members upon anonymous authority. However, it chanced that when the denunciations arrived from the Bass, the President, my Lord of Liddesdale, was in an excellent humour, and was not greatly moved either by the proposed revelations of Beattie Ellison, or by the obviously interested complaints of the soldiers. He would most likely have reenclosed both documents to the Governor of the Bass for note and comment, had it not been for the chance presence at the Council table of no less a person than His Highness the Duke of York himself.

At this time the Duke was always on the watch for whatever would help him to get creditably through the next hour, and it struck him that it would be sport to have the treacherous Whig and the indignant Governor brought face to face.

"And who is this governor?" he demanded, fingering the letter Beattie had written, and which, considering how little light old George's lantern afforded, was really a triumph of caligraphy.

Liddesdale looked a little discomfited, but he answered adroitly enough.

"Your Grace, he is an officer of Colonel Grahame's, recommended strongly by him for the post—indeed his own resignation was threatened if it were not yielded."

"Ah, Colonel Grahame," said Duke James, in an altered tone, "there is more in this man than I thought. Let me see; the Colonel will be in Edinburgh to-morrow night, and can answer for himself. What say you? Let us have the tell-tale Whig and the Colonel's *protégé* before us. Then we can call in Colonel Grahame and ask him what had best be done!"

"I can tell your Grace that beforehand," said Liddesdale dryly. "For the scribbling Whig there will be a rope needed down in the Grassmarket, and as to Captain Grif, I judge that Colonel Grahame will not let us off under a Baronetcy of Nova Scotia for him!"

"By St. Anthony, I love a man!" cried the Duke; "it pleasures me that a little laird and colonel of horse can thus override you all! I would give a hundred pound to see Colonel Grahame's face when you tell him that his man is in danger of his life on a Whig's information. Ha—I promise myself much entertainment. Let the examination be settled for Tuesday and let the Whig and the Governor be sent for separately from the Bass. I shall preside at your meeting in person."

The Duke turned on his heel and strolled out, leaving the Council to glance uneasily at each other.

"Very well for him," said my Lord Liddesdale, at last, "Colonel Grahame have we always with us—but my Lord Duke have we not always! He will rate us like curs when the Duke is gone!"

Tuesday was not long in coming, filled congenially for the members of the Privy Council with the sentencing of preachers, the depriving of doubtful officials, the fining of non-church-attending lairds, and the issuing of warrants of apprehension against all rebels, Whigs, and rigorous Presbyterians. Yet there sat hardly one about that council table who had not been all three—a fact which perhaps caused them to be all the keener in carrying out the orders which came to them from London.

The Duke was unusually prompt. The ordinary President of the Council, the Earl of Liddesdale, stood aside to give him the chief seat. Buccleuch, the man of the greatest influence among them, ordinarily so proud and arrogant, fawned upon the King's brother and the heir to the throne. Lord Advocate Mackenzie, the bloodhound of the troop, sat a little apart, at once watchful and scornful, with the brow of a scholar and the eyes of Reynard the fox.

The Duke of York threw himself back with a pleased chuckle.

"I have warned Colonel Grahame," he said, "that he might be wanted at the Council to-day, but have given him no inkling of the cause. I said only that my Lord of Liddesdale told me so."

"For that courtesy I thank your Grace!" said Liddesdale, more dryly than was usual with him.

"Whereupon," continued James, "Colonel Grahame asked if so be my Lord Liddesdale had lost the power of speech that he could not communicate his own messages, but must use royal messengers to command a soldier's attendance!"

Liddesdale shrugged his shoulders, but said nothing, while the Duke, looking round the Council from under his long veiled eyelashes, maliciously enjoyed the general discomfiture.

"It strikes me certain great men have found their master," he said, "but be not afraid—I shall not call him in till the proper moment."

The Chamber of the Privy Council of Scotland was long and low, dark oak above, wainscotted beneath. One corner was completely curtained off, but an impeded fold of the cloth, catching upon a hook in the wall, permitted a glimpse of the strangest engines of torture (in which the Duke took so great interest), the "boot," the rack, and other instruments such as the Council found useful in persuading the costive of speech.

Bars of treble thickness and full eight feet high defended the tables round which sat the members of the Council, from the cage into which the prisoners about to be examined were introduced. This change had been made ever since the great day when huge Sandy Gordon, called the bull of Earlstoun, had charged among them with his gaud of iron, and, as saith the record, "loundered them soundly upon the broadest of their apparel with the bar of iron, till all the courtyard itself was filled with the cries of the mighty Privy Council of Scotland."

"Let the Whig with the long tongue be brought in!" said the Duke, leaning back and thrusting both thumbs into his waistband.

"Bring in Beattie Ellison!" ordered Liddesdale, succinctly, indicating the iron cage of witnessing with his forefinger.

Upon Beattie the Bass had put its mark, and he looked mean and sneaking, moving restlessly about like a trapped animal behind the bars.

"Stand still in one place and answer my Lords!" said the soldier, who, with a drawn sword, stood behind him. "That is the Duke himself at the table-head!"

Of all present only the Duke of York and Sir George Mackenzie manifested the least interest in Beattie or in his testimony.

It was the Duke of York who asked the questions. A continual though languid curiosity possessed him. In other circumstances he would have been the chief gossip of a village and filled the post to a marvel.

"You wrote the Privy Council a letter offering to discover certain secrets which concern the Governor of the prison in which you find yourself. Well, tell me, what do you expect to gain by that, supposing for a moment that we should find you are well informed and your information useful?"

"Only the protection of my Lords, and the consciousness of having served the King," said Beattie; "only liberty to continue my studies in the arts!"

"Doubtless that you may proceed to Holland, and thence come back full-fledged with treason to mislead the poor ignorant folk of the hills," said the Duke of York.

"Nay," urged Beattie, with seeming earnestness, "I am indeed no fanatic. My brother serves His Majesty in his Dragoon Guards. I would serve him in the church—having leanings to such a life!"

"As a curate? Under the authority of a bishop, and ordained by him?" demanded Sir George Mackenzie, better accustomed to probe wavering and whiggish consciences.

Beattie appeared to find a difficulty in speaking. He gulped, but at last got out the single word "Yes!"

"Hum," said the Duke of York, somewhat bored by Sir George's interruption, "very well. Now, let us hear what you have to say."

"My Lords," said Beattie, beginning his prepared speech, "may it please you, it has come to my knowledge——"

"Get on!" ordered the Duke sharply, "speak plain and short as you value your neck!"

"The commander of the troops on the Bass calls himself 'Captain Grif,'" said Beattie, "his real name is Sergeant

Major Rysland, of Cornet Grahame's troop of Dragoons, and my brother with his own eyes saw him kill one of His Majesty's most faithful servants, the Laird of Houston, in Galloway, cousin to the Laird of Lag, and one of the officers of the local militia."

At this Liddesdale looked up sharply.

"Ha," he began, "why, we have been searching for that fellow everywhere!"

But the Duke of York silenced him with a wave of his hand.

"Give the man his tether," he murmured, "it is yet a good half-hour before Colonel Grahame will be here." Then in a louder tone he added, "And so your brother told you this—the soldier of dragoons?"

"No," said Beattie, hastily, eager to have all the credit to himself, "he is all on the Governor's side. I myself knew Sergeant Major Rysland when he was quartered in Irongray village. I recognised him at once when I was sent prisoner to the Bass. Of the murder there were several witnesses, all belonging to the militia except my brother, who saw the killing by accident from the side of Kersland quarry-hole!"

"So you would lay aside the Whig cloak for the curate's cassock, my lad?" inquired the Duke of York, smiling with a languid sort of finesse; "you have, then, no vocation for the military scarlet like your brother?"

"None, my Lord Duke!" said Beattie, who, not knowing the King's brother, imagined that he was speaking to the Duke of Queensberry; "I had thought that I might be indulged with a cure of souls under your Grace's own eye!"

A faint quiver of mirth passed about the board. James felt it as something in the air, for of course the obduracy of his Roman views were known to all.

"I do not think that entirely likely," he said, smiling, "that were a change indeed!"

"But as to this Rysland being a Dutch spy," he went on, "upon what do you base that charge?"

"My Lord," said Beattie, "he was formerly in the service of the Prince of Orange!"

"Hem," remarked the Duke carelessly, "I am not over fond of my good son-in-law, but I would not hold it sufficient ground for calling a man a spy, that he had once served with the Prince. He breeds good soldiers, our Buckram Man, and this governor fellow, even by your own telling, seems to be monstrous ready with weapons!"

"There remains his freedom with the provisions," continued the Duke, after a pause, "I see not much in that to detain us. Had you your share of the claret, sirrah?"

"I had," Beattie admitted, "I was compelled to drink it!"

"Be thankful, then," said Duke James. "Officer, bid the governor of the Bass step this way. No, not into the prisoners' dock—let us have no bloodshed. Here—at the table's end. I thank you, my Lord Advocate!"

Sir George Mackenzie had moved his chair back so that there might be room for the Governor.

Grif entered with a firm and even haughty step. All his life he had stood before great princes, warlike lords, and the mighty of the earth, and having the conscience of duty performed, why should Grif Rysland discomfort himself?

"A good day, Mr. Governor," said the Duke, bowing courteously, "the Lords of the Privy Council have some questions to ask of you. First, do you know this man?"

Grif's eye passed over Beattie Ellison, with a single glance of contempt.

"He is, I believe, one of the prisoners sometime committed to my charge in the Castle of the Bass. He was taken over by order of the Clerk of Council the night before last, and conveyed to Edinburgh. I hold a receipt for the delivery of his body and so am clear of him."

"You are not aware, then, that he has preferred certain accusations against you?" continued the Duke, "which, if true, are of the last degree of seriousness."

"No, my Lord," said Grif, simply, "of that I was not aware."

"He accused you of bearing a false name, and claiming a false rank upon the Bass, of having imposed upon Colonel Grahame, of having murdered the Laird of Houston, a valued officer of the King, and with having distributed indiscriminate charity to the fanatics, your prisoners on the Island, in order to gain their good-will in any future troubles!"

"My Lords," said a new and firm voice, of a military brusqueness, "I am here to answer these charges—that is, if your Highness will permit me to speak."

Duke James nodded indulgently, with a half-mocking smile at those about him.

"In Scotland everything is permitted to Colonel Grahame, so far as I have seen," he said. "I am glad that I have left most of my valuables behind me in London, except (he added, in an undertone) Anne Hyde, whom God preserve!"

Col. Grahame took no notice of anything but the permission to speak.

"Then," he said, grimly, "I will answer these accusations one by one. This gentleman's name is Grif Rysland. I asked of the Privy Council to confer on him the brevet-rank of Captain upon his appointment as Governor of the Bass, which I now further ask of them to confirm. It is true that he killed in a duel, after the most serious provocation, a certain pestilent fellow named the Laird of Houston—one of those whose stupid excesses give the King's service an evil name. From him Capt. Grif Rysland took no favours. He accepted one of Houston's own friends for a second, waived his choice of weapons, of position, everything—and allowed the fellow three several chances of making an apology. For me, I would not have given him one. And then—sent him flying to his own place!"

At this moment a messenger entered the Council room breathless with haste, and, kneeling the while, handed a sealed letter to the Duke. He flipped it open, read it hastily, changed colour, and with a serious, "You must excuse me, gentlemen all?" he quitted the table and the room.

It was an evil moment for Grif Rysland. For at the door, as if struck with a sudden thought, Duke James turned, and calling out, "Colonel Grahame, pray attend me; I have need of your counsel!" he was gone and Grif's defender with him.

Liddesdale moved into the vacant place at the head of the table and there was a long silence. Grif kept his place immovable, his hand on his sword-hilt, and as for Beattie, nobody regarded him at all—not even the soldier who with drawn sword had been set to guard him in the iron-barred cage.

"Ah, Sergeant," said Liddesdale at last, "it may be as well to defer this business. After all, killing is killing, even if it be no murder, whatever Colonel Grahame may say. And there are other matters."

He put out his hand, selected old George's letter and read it aloud.

"What have you to say to that?" he asked with something of a brow-beating air.

"Simply this," said Grif, "I found a lot of jail-refuse on the Bass, thriving on the plunder of the prisoners, ignorant of the manual of exercise, ignorant of drill, ignorant of musketry practice. On these points they have been informed. That is all."

"The Laird of Houston was a notable man," said Liddesdale, "and useful to us. We cannot look over that altogether. At the same time, Sergeant, we recognise that you are a gallant man, and for the present would not put any personal restraint upon you. But till we have further deliberated, we order you not to return to the Bass, and hold yourself ready to appear before us again when we summon you!"

"I will do more," said Grif Rysland, "with the permission of the most noble Council. I am a soldier of fortune. I have served many masters in many lands. I have never yet been faulted, nor will I now. What I have done I am ready to answer for. I therefore resign the brevet-rank which, at the request of Colonel Grahame, you bestowed upon me, as well as any claim to that which my commander has just asked for me. I retire to rest this old sword, my Lords of the Council. I had a daughter and she is dead. Why should I break any more a thankless bread? I have striven to serve the King faithfully, and my sole wish is that the King's Councillors had been better content with me!"

Grif bowed and went out, none hindering him or returning his salute.

Again there fell a silence, which after a while Queensberry broke. "This is your doing, Liddesdale," he said, "I hope you see your way through it. It strikes me that the King has lost a good servant and a stout sword this day!"

"And that," queried Tarbert, "what are you going to do with—*that?*"

He pointed to Beattie standing still in his cage.

Liddesdale looked at him thoughtfully a moment, a doubtful frown on his brow. He was on the point of sending him to the "Free Toom" for all such as got in the way of Charles the Second's Privy Council—that is—to the Grassmarket of Edinburgh. But after a long look at the young man's face he changed his mind.

"Faith," he said, "he hath after all a look of Jamie Sharp. We may make something of him yet. Officer of the Chamber, give this lad a bed at your house, and entertain him fitly at the expense of the King—but no claret, mind. He hath complained of it."

And so, laughing at the smallness of his own jest, the President of the Council drew his peers off to the consideration of the other business which lay before them. And Grif Rysland wandered down the High Street of Edinburgh once more a free man.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THE MUTINY UPON THE BASS

QUIETLY in the house of Prayerful Peter, quietly in the snug cove of Cantie Bay, under the frowns of Tantallon, proceeded the days. But right stormily they went, out on the Bass, across that narrow blue strait of restless gleaming water. Between peace absolute and angry plotting, Long-bodied John was the one link of connection. He crossed every morning to the Bass, and in the dusk of each evening he was to be found under the cliff. Things went from bad to worse till one day there broke forth mutiny, evasion, chase, capture, the crackle of musketry, the angry uprising of myriads of sea-birds, the escape and secreting of a fugitive in the caverns under.

All, however, went on as usual about that peaceful pyramid of rock at anchor out there on the summer waters, and nothing was obvious from the shore, not even to the quick eyes of Prayerful Peter. Only Long-bodied John, passing here and there in his boat upon the endless affairs of his uncle, noted certain white jets of smoke that rose and melted into the thinner air, almost as fast as the reek of his own pipe when he lay in the sun at the cave's mouth, the cave of his refuge from overmuch landward cleanliness.

"It cannot be the solans they are wasting powder upon," he meditated, "they would take the fat little gorbs in their hands at this time of year. No more can it be the rabbits. They would set snares at the hole's mouth. It cannot be the prisoners they are shooting at. They have to answer for them to the Bluidy Mackenzie."

He thought awhile. Then suddenly he slapped his hand on his knee.

"It's that red sodjer, Raith Ellison, the Whig turn-coat that Governor Grif made commander when he left the Island. Grif has not come back, and this is the third day. They will ken what that means. He is in disgrace—in the grip of the Council, and they are hunting the poor young man like a partridge among the mountains. I declare I will take out the boat and see!"

It was no difficult thing that morning for John of the Lengthy Body to lay a course for the Isle. He had his sail set, and his fishing lines displayed.

"They will not know any better—except Allister, that is," he said, "and I may as well see the fun."

But on the Bass it was no fun for Raith Ellison. It was true that he had been left as interim governor of the Bass, in the absence of Grif Rysland, departed to Edinburgh to answer the demand of the Privy Council. Against him Old George, with all save Tyars, the Englishman, and the fisher lads Allister and his cousins, formed a firm conspiracy.

One day—two days—three days the mutineers had waited eagerly for news. Then from Edinburgh, written fairly upon official paper and bearing the stamp of the privy council, came to George Jex the news that the petition of the garrison of the Bass had been graciously listened to. Governor Grif would no more return, and as for B. E. (who communicated this intelligence), he was being entertained with kindness within the precincts of the Council Chamber itself at the expense of the King, and "was in the way of being exalted to greater honour."

It was little, but for such men it was enough. George Jex would have liked to receive a definite mandate constituting him governor of the fortress and prison of the Bass, but his band of followers cared not at all for that. They had no particular objection to Old George as a governor. They knew well that they would frighten, bully, coax, or compulse George at their will. But of one thing they were certain. They would no longer obey Raith Ellison. Whoever was Governor of the Bass, he was not. The disgrace of the master bore with it the downfall of the man.

But Raith Ellison had had some months' training at the hands of a soldier great among soldiers. He had learned more things than one, and he had no lack of courage.

At the first symptom of dissatisfaction, he had promptly knocked over the culprit, a hulking fellow named Corkcodale, a Stranraer Irishman, as the saying is. Next he ordered him to be placed in a cell, an order which, in the absence of Old George, and the unknown sentiments of Maurice Tyars, was grumblingly and even insolently obeyed.

By the time Old George appeared, peace had again been restored—that is, to all appearance. Raith was making his usual round of the prisoners' cells, steeling his heart to meet the silence of his father and the averted eyes of Gil. He asked at each door whether there were any complaints to make, arranged for the cleansing details of the day, and was about to leave the cell behind the bars of which stood Peden the Prophet, when the old minister, who had never taken his eyes off the young man's face, motioned him to come closer.

"Snows on Lebanon," he said, in his usual mystic manner, "snows that are near the melting! Husks in the swine-troughs of a far country! The prodigal is an hungered and there is none to give unto him. Apples of Sodom—grapes of Gomorrah—oh, bitter, bitter fruit! The young do foolishness in the sight of the Lord, but their sin is not unto death. Over the wall with you, lad. For you the wicked bend the bow. They spread the net. Over the wall, I tell you, and the Lord of all the families of the earth be gracious to the son of poor stubborn William Ellison."

Something about the Prophet's manner—a tang of invincible reality in his message bore in upon Raith Ellison. The corner of the bars offered a foothold—not from the side of the prisoners, but from that of the terrace walk along which the sentry on duty was wont to march. But he was at that moment in the main guard along with Old George Jex and his fellow-ruffians.

Their plan was to fall upon Raith as he went out. A knife in his throat and a quiet berth among the straw at the back of the guard-room would do his business till the night should come. Then they could dispose of the body, as everything is disposed of on the Bass, over the cliffs which descend sheer into the sea.

To his surprise Raith found a stout doubled rope securely attached to an iron ring in the wall. It was Allister the fisherman's cradle on which he swung the prisoners' packages first to the little stand of rock, from which he lowered them into the boat of Long-bodied John, lying immediately beneath. In an instant Raith had reached the same perch of peril. From here, with a leap and then a short crawl on hands and knees he got upon the turf of the Isle, just at the place where the nests of the gannets mustered thickest. Raith slipped on the half-rotten piles of seaweed. The older birds moved awkwardly away before him. The younger lay meekly crouching closely to the ground, as if praying him not to tread upon them. Some were quite small and only partially fledged. Others were covered with fine down, while yet others were apparently ready to fly.

Curiously enough the parent gannets did not rise with the clamorous ostentation of most sea-birds. And to this, doubtless, Raith owed his life. The sentinel put his head out of the main guard from time to time, watching the progress of the acting governor along the front of the cells.

It did not at all surprise him that he should enter one or other of these. Both Ellison and his master, Captain Grif, had such interfering tricks. With a smile he jerked his head back to report, as he observed Raith pass hastily before the prison-house of his father and brother.

"The family quarrel is not made up yet, George," he said. "The martyrs will not have anything to do with the prodigal!"

"I'll martyr him," growled George Jex, truculently, "I'll make up the quarrel once and for all. Now do you understand, you three? You are to jump on him from the ledge of the gun-rack. I will meet him in front."

"And who is to do it, George?" said the sentry, turning a little pale.

"I will," said George, licking his lips; "in my youth I was prentice to a flesher in the West Port, and—see here, lads, it was like this that we blooded the calves!"

He produced a knife as he spoke, made a suggestive pass, and the sentry shuddered. Some of the others, however, appeared fascinated.

"Don't, George," said one of them; "give him a chance for his life! It seems like murder."

"It is murder," said George Jex, grimly, "but it's the only way. Throwing over the cliffs is no good—boats always about—look yonder,—and he can swim like a gull. Wasn't he over Hughie's cliff once before, and turned up again as sound as Berwick Law!"

"Hey, what's that?" called out the sentry, suddenly, "run, George—somebody's calling you!"

"'Tis only Tom Earsman, silly loon," said another, "he's always twistin' the necks of them half-grown solans!"

However, a suspicion darted through the mind of Old George. "Tom Earsman's down at the landing-place waiting for more news," he said, "run along you, and see that the Lobster-back is safe in the cells. Fetch word quick, what he is doing there so long, and you lads, get up on the rack and be ready to jump on his back when I give the word. Not a sound!"

The sentry ran from one cell to the other, looking for Raith, in every case vainly. Peden received his anxious inquiry with the text which certainly, all things considered, had some bearing on the circumstances: "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us!"

And as the discomfited sentinel made his way back, the voice of the prophet rang in his ears with the stern message, "He that sitteth in the Heavens shall laugh—the Lord shall have them in derision."

But though the rage of Old George Jex burst out in a perfect fury on his return, it was checked by the sounds that came from above. Shots, outcries, exclamations, view halloos, the scampering of men in pursuit of an escaping quarry.

From the corner above the castle Raith was plain to be seen making his way towards the eastern portion of the Isle.

"We have him," gasped Old George, who was not made for uphill exercise; "all that part is bare cliff and made slippery by the birds."

"Crack! Crack!" went the shots as Raith made a dart across the open grass or took shelter for a moment behind a rock. He had only a double-barrelled pistol with him, the legacy of Grif, who had advised him always to carry it among "that scaly crew." He had, however, in addition, his powder-flask at his side, and plenty of balls loose in his waistcoat pocket. So he waited, glancing with care at his priming, and remembering with a kind of thankfulness how that very morning before entering on his rounds, he had recharged both barrels from the Governor's own store. He lay quite still. The bullets clipped sharply on the rocks near him, and some of them sped away in new directions humming like bumble-bees. One almost spent burned his ear, as if a red-hot pin had been thrust through it. He did not know that he had been wounded till the blood dropped on the back of his hand.

"Go on—take him! Take him!" shouted Old George, painfully labouring up the slippery grass, "forward with you, cowards! He is unarmed, I tell you! Seize him before he gets down the cliff!"

One Bully Bellows, a gutter rat of the Edinburgh High Street, advanced, his musket in both hands.

"I see him!" he shouted. "After me—we have him. He will not knock us about any more!"

"*Ping!*" with a kind of barking noise Raith's pistol spoke. It was a long and heavy arm, made for a cavalryman's holster, but Grif had shown him how to wear it unobtrusively underneath his coat.

"You can't carry it so on horseback," he had said, "for if you fell the stock would break your leg. But when you have to go on foot into a company which may be honest and may not, why then, Raith lad, Sir Double-Mouth is almost as good as a trusty comrade at your elbow!"

Bully Bellows came on shouting, but at that little "ping" down he went all his length on the grass. It was a steep place and his body rolled over and over apparently as pliable as a bag of wool till it reached the bottom of the slope. His companions had refuged behind some rocks, and the one nearest to Bully, reached out a cautious hand and drew him into shelter also.

Old George regarded the wound at first with alarm, and then suddenly his face cleared.

"I was none so easy in my mind before," he said, "but this settles it. He has killed Bully. Bully is as good as dead. And if we kill the murderer now, it is in self-defence."

Which was exceedingly clear to all concerned, and a comfort to other troubled minds besides that of George Jex. The only man dissatisfied was Bully Bellows himself, who, being only shot through the shoulder, did not wish to die, even though it was pointed out to him that by so doing he would certainly save his comrades' necks from a chance of the gallows—"in case the lawyers should make any mistake over yonder," as Old George said, sententiously, pointing to the smoke of Edinburgh upon the far horizon.

But Raith lay still, ambuscaded behind his rocks, just where the slope began to lean towards the easterly cliff. The assailants knew not how many shots he had to distribute among them. But they remembered well enough the long hours that Raith and Captain Grif used to spend firing at the mark. And indeed the sight of Bully Bellows twisting himself in agony at their elbows, prevented them from being too forward in pursuit.

Old George might order and swear. They were used to that. If George Jex were so bold, let him go himself and take the Lobster-back prisoner, or shoot him through the head if so he pleased. As for them, another time would do very well.

"See here," called out Red Bob, a *keely* from the Saltmarket of Glasgow, "this is your job, George. At it ye go! For us we are not such fools as to run after a man that can crack an egg at thirty paces with a bullet."

"Nonsense, ye black cowards," cried George Jex, "he has no more than a shot or two at the most. It is but a rush and all is over."

"I dare say," retorted Red Bob, "and two of us would be over as well. He will have to come out of that for meat and drink. Let us starve him out, say I."

"There are eggs on the rocks," retorted Old George, "guillemots and late-laying sea-mews. There's meat and drink for him at pleasure. At him, lads. It will be over in a minute!"

But Old George could not prevail. There was no real unity among his forces. It was each for his own skin. So the best he could do was to post half-a-dozen to see that Raith Ellison did not leave his fortress, and to take pot-shots at him as often as he showed himself.

But a new mind came on the scene when Maurice Tyars appeared. He was no friend to Old George and had had nothing to do with his futile combinations. But when he ascended the hill and stood by the side of his wounded comrade, Bully Bellows, it seemed to him that there was at last a chance for him. The Englishman had by far the best head of the garrison.

"I will capture this fellow who has wounded Bully," he said to himself, "George is an old doating ninny, and will never get any credit, or know how to use it if he did. But here is a wounded man, and yonder is the man who has done it."

He suddenly saw himself named Governor of the Bass for services rendered.

So he suggested that instead of remaining at their posts all day till the darkness came, when Ellison could easily slip past them, or put a bullet into them from behind, they should scatter, and by getting behind him, put him into the centre of a ring of muskets. Or failing that, they could easily pin him into a corner, and fire upon him from above.

"With our numbers we can always keep the height of the island against one man," he argued.

There was sense in what Maurice Tyars said, and as the garrison spread out and round, it soon became obvious that it would not be possible for Raith to remain where he was. So he stripped his red coat, which made him everywhere so prominent a mark. He was now in his shirt and breeches, a clean-limbed lithe figure, accustomed from his youth to running and climbing. All at once he stood erect, shouted defiance, and then as instantly ducked, thus escaping the volley that spatted viciously on the rocks which sheltered him.

Then while the greater number of the hostile pieces (and certainly all those of the best and quickest shots) were thus empty, Raith made a bolt for it, cutting diagonally across the turf in the direction of the lower and more indented northern side.

Only two hasty bullets sped in the track of the fugitive. Maurice Tyars vainly called on those who had gone round to the cliffs to cut him off.

But he had not to deal with men of any desperate courage, and the aspect of Raith Ellison, his shirt and sleeves spotted with blood, a knife in one hand and a horse-pistol in the other, was certainly disquieting. Instead of closing in, the men who had been sent along the northern side, cleared out at sight of him as fast as they could.

Tyars himself, however, with Old George (now on his mettle with anger and jealousy) were already close behind. It was as much as Raith could do to cross the little plain of birds' nests to the edge of the crags before the fusillade began again more furiously than before.

Tyars, who now took the command in spite of Old George, ordered the pursuers to spread out and take the fugitive on either flank. So step by step, Raith was driven back to the verge of the precipice. No further rush was tried, however, for some time, Tyars being the only man present with the courage to face that deadly double-barrelled pistol.

But at last, by dint of climbing and crawling face to the rock, one after another of the garrison appeared to right and left of him, some higher up and able to direct a raking fire without exposing an eyebrow—others beneath, but within easy range, a position from which the dropping fire of their old-fashioned musketoons and firelocks was hardly less dangerous.

Raith glanced behind him to make out his position. He was on Hughie's cliff. A few steps more and he would be driven to the verge. As a reminder a musket ball clipped the toe of his boot and stung him like a knock on the funny bone. This made him angry. He bent and removed his boots, making up his mind to what was before him.

At the same moment Tyars, seeing his prey hard-pushed, tried a rush, signalling those to the east and west to close in upon him. Raith stood erect, fired the two barrels of his pistol into the advancing crowd, and saw the Englishman fling up his hands suddenly and fall forward. Then dashing his empty pistol in the face of his nearest assailant who rushed at him with uplifted sword, he took a short run, and sprang off Hughie's cliff into the sea.

The mutiny upon the Bass was at an end.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE DEIL'S BACK-KITCHEN

Out on the still sea water, scarcely rocking, lay the fishing-boat of Prayerful Peter. Needless to say the owner was not on board. But on a pile of nets, prone in the stern, his hand on a guiding oar and his eyes just above the gunwale, lay the Long Body of John of that Ilk. He was close in under the freeboard, and all but the sharpest observers might have thought the little fishing craft wholly empty.

But Long-bodied John was by no means blind. The interest of these little puffs of smoke seen mounting from the light grey turf of the Bass, and the white jets springing from behind the rocks had drawn him as near as he dared to go—which in this case was much nearer than if Captain Grif had been in command, when a cannon ball plumping within twenty yards of his bows would most likely have conveyed a hint that a nearer approach had better not be attempted.

But John knew that those on the Bass that day were far too busy to think of his fishing-boat with only an oar trailing over the stern, and a little bushing of sail hardly bigger than a man's coat spread out in the bows to give her steering-way.

Long-bodied John was so near that he could hear the rattle of musketry, and now and then the hoarse cries of the men as they encouraged each other. The sharper and faster *spit-spit* of Raith's pistols he could not distinguish. But when at the last he saw the young man's body cleave the air "for a' the world like a solan divin' for herrin'" he knew very well what had happened.

"And he can soom, the turn-coat," he grumbled, watching the swimmer, "faith, he has focht them a'—aye, and I am prood to think that he has left some sair heids up yonder on the Bass, for a' their silly rinnin' and crying. There he gangs—guid be wi' him, turn-coat or no!"

He watched the figure of Raith pass under the cliffs evidently looking for some cavern or place of temporary refuge. Farther out but sufficiently distant from the boat the water was lashed white with the bullets which still rained from above.

"Silly deevils,—whatna hairm do they think they are doin' him by the like o' that?" grumbled John; "what a waste o' guid powder and shot! Mony a worthless seefer micht hae been weel oot o' his suffering gin that lead had been pitten to a better use! But where's he makin' for noo? Oh, if I could but tell him o' Francie's Nest, or the Tunnel! But he'll never find them hissel'—Ah, but he has manned it. That's the nook that they caa Hell's Back-kitchen—an awesome place when there is a storm frae off the norr'ard. But he is gye and safe there for this nicht, and I'm no sayin'—renigate as he is—John Paton never let a man perish when he could help it. And for the sake o'—We-Ken-Wha—the lass ower by yonder that's sae chief wi' the mither and sister o' him—I'll e'en find him a cosier shelter than that cauld crawly dreepin' hole—Ech, aye, man John, but it's wonderfu' what ane will do for the sake o' a lass!"

Long-bodied John directed his boat's prow away from the Isle with a couple of sweeps of his long steering-oar. He saw that the men of the garrison, eager in the pursuit of Raith, were manning the boats to make the circuit of the rock. His lip curled scornfully.

"There's never a man o' them that's fit to handle a boat," growled Long John, "they darena gang near the rock for the surf, a' but Allister and his cousins, and I'se answer for them!"

The shrewd one of the Long Body proved to be right. The boats were indeed put out from the landing-place, but as they were mere cockle-shells for size, as was necessary, seeing that they had to be lifted bodily out of the water and swung out of the reach of the waves by a small crane erected for the purpose, those in them did not venture close into the cliffs.

"Aye, yonder's Allister," said Long-bodied John, narrowing his eyes till the pupils became mere specks, after the manner of seafaring folk, "I can see his arm wag-waggin'. I'll wager noo he is tellin' them that the lad's to a certainty drooned, and that it's a mere riskin' o' life and limb to gang farther in to seek for him—whilk wad be true eneuch if the wind were to tak a wee turn into the north."

He watched the boats pass along between him and the steep bare cliffs.

"Noo," he exclaimed, "they are brave and het. Lord, will they never gang on? What's Allister thinkin' aboot? There's the airm up again. He is layin' it aff grand. Ye wad think he was Maister Peden himsel' at a sacrament—the useless loon. What for does he no put his back into the oar, and gang on! Ah, that's better!"

"Crackle! Crackle!" went a volley of musketry, and the smoke rose from the boat side.

"Losh, sirs, they hae gotten him," said Long-bodied John—"waes me! What for could he no hae keepit closer doon? But no, it's only the silly ignorant carles firing away the King's poother and shot at the geese and Tammie-Nories! Praise the Lord for the fools that are on the earth. For assuredly He hath sent great plenty o' them to the Bass!"

Very anxiously all that day Long-bodied John watched the wind. Certain fine-combed mares' tails flicking longer and thinner out of the north filled him with uneasiness. Also as the day began to close in, a clear greenish light in the sky strengthened his fear.

The boats retired after having in vain made the circuit of the Isle. The men, evidently glad to have the place to themselves, scrambled about the rock in twos and threes wantonly firing off their guns among the home-returning solans and sea-mews.

"Thae puir lads in the barred cells," said Long-bodied John, "guid peety them this nicht—by their lone selves and siccan a crew to deal wi'!"

But he himself had something on his own mind. He dared not trust his uncle with the secret. Peter and he were good enough partners on most occasions, but there were times when the nephew kept his own counsel most carefully. This was one of them. He did not believe that Prayerful Peter would have sold the escaping Raith to his enemies on the Bass. Nevertheless a quiet tongue never did a man any harm in this world, so far as Long-bodied John had seen. So he sat silent at the evening meal in the cottage, and only went off to his vigil under the rock a little earlier than usual.

He had been right in his prognostication. The wind was indeed rising out of the north, beaconed by the clear emerald light, and in an hour or two the Deil's Back-kitchen would be no desirable place of residence, or even house of call.

Yet John dared not hasten. The gloaming must come first. There might be spies on the Island. His uncle would certainly be watching from the cave above the hut in Cantie Bay. With a heart that yearned towards the poor fugitive (though set against his double estate of "runnagate" and "red sodjer") John watched the white waves crawl and snatch and whiten along the black gully where he knew Raith Ellison to be in hiding.

At last a heavy cloud, rising sullenly over the Fife Lomonds and the distant coast, banking up in ridge behind ridge of crenellations, gave John courage to approach. It was a dangerous piece of work at best. The wind was now blowing straight in shore, and he was risking both his boat and his life close to the most dangerous cliffs of the Island. But John of the Long Body thought nothing of that. He did as much every night of his life, and for less than a man's safety.

He ran the boat in towards the Bass, till the loom of the cliff was imminent overhead, and then, turning the boat sideways to keep steerage way on her, he shouted at the pitch of his voice, "Raith Ellison, I am a friend—Long John Paton. Strip and swim out to me, I can come no nearer."

Raith heard, but indistinctly. The rising tempest had already begun to send the waves roaring into his retreat, and he could easily see that the tide had only to rise to a certain height before he must be drowned. Moreover, as the water sucked away towards the narrow entrance of the Deil's Back-kitchen, it gave him an ugly suggestion of irresistible power, though no more than his foot and ankle had been seized. Raith felt, for the first time in his life, what he had not experienced even on Hughie's rock, the sense of being trapped and taken.

But he heard the voice faintly, and each time that the boat passed and repassed he caught Long John Paton's message more clearly. At first he thought, "Can I trust him?" But when the next wave came through the narrow black passage, fringed with phosphorescent foam, and sucked more powerfully about his knees, he felt that his question was answered.

"I *must* trust him!" he said.

And with his usual simple resolution, Raith made ready for the dive. It was a summer night and the wind whistled keen as Raith Ellison stripped to the skin, stood a moment, and drew in a long breath before plunging into the turmoil of waters. He knew very well that he must go deep, and swim a long distance under water before he could hope to be clear of the dangerous passage which was the only way out of the Deil's Back-kitchen.

Once he failed. He felt a check. His side scraped the smooth rock far below. He had misjudged his time. The slow heave of the incoming wave frustrated his effort. It raised him, in spite of himself, to the surface. His shoulder struck the sharp angle of the rock, and the sting of the salt water told him that he was wounded. He was back again at the place from which he had started.

There came a great *g-y-oo-w* of wind which almost beat him flat against the cliff.

"Now or never," he said; "Raith Ellison, you are a dead man unless you can do it this time!"

He waited only for the incoming wave, dived into the turbulent bubbling slack of the water, and struck out strongly. The sea felt chill about him—it was velvety black also. He must be, he knew, very deep. On—on! there was no motion as of tossing, only a hush about his ears. He was coming to the surface. The arm of a rough sea coat was about him. In a moment or two he was lying exhausted in the bottom of a boat, covered with Long-bodied John's own cloak, as they bore triumphantly away towards Cantie Bay. There would be no messages let down from the cliff that night, or at least, thought John, no boat to take them. The storm was rising fast, and the sooner he was within the little land-bound anchorage of Cantie Bay, the better it would be for him.

But what was he to say to his uncle? It was clear that Raith Ellison must be taken to the cave—the cave up among the rocks under the foundations of Tantallon. But there must be no word breathed about an escaping soldier of dragoons, coadjutor of Captain Grif, suspended and perhaps imprisoned by the King's Privy Council.

As for Raith he lay most of the way unconscious. But when at last they got behind the lee of a little island, the one furthest to the east going seaward, the water became less troubled, and Long-bodied John, who was prepared for most of the emergencies which confront those who go down to the sea in ships, produced a flask of good Bordeaux cognac and made his passenger drink a stiff tass of it.

"Now, listen," he said, "I am risking my own life by this, Raith Ellison. Ye ken that. My uncle must not be told who you are. Ye are an Ellison—a prisoner escaped from the Bass! Mind ye that. He has only seen you in your soldier's coat and at a distance. Peter Paton does not come to the landing-place o' the Bass oftener than he can help. Sae, if you canna tell a lee, keep your mouth shut and let me do it for ye. Understand—you are a Covenant man, an Hebrew o' the Hebrews, and we are gaun to hide ye in the cave. I will talk to my uncle. I'll chairge mysel' wi' ony lees that hae to be telled!"

The boat came in rapidly. Prayerful Peter was there, waiting in the darkness to make all fast.

"What have you got there, John?" he said, as he handled the rope. His nephew stooped and whispered in his ear.

"Well, better say nothing—for the present," grumbled Peter, "it's an awkward job—one son up in Edinburgh making acquaintance wi' the thumbikins, and another dead ahint the dyke. There will be a good price to lift for a' this danger and risk—besides damage to my boat in sic a storm. And sae I will tell my Lord Kenmure when him and me settles accoonts."

For many of the nobility and gentry of Scotland, men who themselves took no part in open rebellion against the King, had formed an association, amply furnished with money, to aid threatened persons to escape to Holland or Ireland, and to sustain them with money while in exile there. And for his services, which were undoubtedly valuable, Prayerful Peter received excellent emoluments—chiefly, as he said, by means of my Lord Kenmure, when he came into that country to visit his friend, the Earl of Haddington.

Prayerful Peter was no ill hearted man in the main, but, as his nephew said, "the world had set a sore grappling iron in him."

He did much good by stealth, which he would have blushed to find fame, but he had no objection to find the waters return his bread as minted gold. He was true to his own party, perhaps would have been so even without interested reasons. But, as his nephew shrewdly calculated, it was as well not to present Raith Ellison to Peter Paton as a penniless exile cast off by both parties in the state, disowned by his own father, and pursued to the death by Peter's excellent customers, the present garrison of the Bass.

Raith slept soundly that night. Hot brandy and water, a comfortable bed, made up of webs of Flanders cloth, a bundle of Valenciennes lace for his pillow, two or three sea cloaks for a covering, and the shut door of the cave beneath the brow of Tantallon made no such despicable lodging and entertainment for a man who had spent the morning in being shot at and the afternoon in the Deil's Back-kitchen.

He woke more than once during the night, and listened to the howling of the storm without. But the fumes of the cognac were still in his brain, and he only turned over on his side and slept—slept till Long-bodied John, his morning duty at the Bass done, flung the door suddenly wide, and let in the sun of noonday upon the startled sleeper.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

IN TANTALLON CAVE

PRAYERFUL PETER and his nephew slowly ascended the cliff by the long detour which they had discovered. This by concealed and secret ways led finally to the cave. At intervals Prayerful Peter shook his head and groaned, walking ever more slowly.

"I'm nane sae sure aboot this wark," he said, looking over his shoulder at his nephew, "there will be an awesome din in the countryside—a prisoner breakin' frae His Majesty's ain prison o' the Bass. Saw ye ony hullabaloo yesterday?"

"There was a heap o' blaffin' awa' o' poother," said Long-bodied John, honestly, "but, as far as I saw, to but little purpose. The governor's awa' in Edinburgh, and there is neither head nor tail to the business ower yonder."

Peter Paton stood pondering a moment, rolling the quid of tobacco in his cheek which he always placed there on leaving the cottage.

"Aye, aye," he meditated, half to himself, "dootless that will be it. The cat's awa'—the mice will play! Aweel, the lad will hae to bide a while up in the heuch yonder. That will cost siller, though I suppose he had nane on him when ye got him oot o' the water?"

"He hadna as muckle as a stitch o' cleading on his body," said his nephew grimly; "man, Peter, he dived oot o' the jaws o' the Deil's Back-kitchen, wi' the wind i' the north! So I canna see where he could carry muckle siller."

"Aweel, he's o' the stock," continued Peter, "the auld Ellison stock—Simpsons by the mither o' them. There's siller there on baith sides, and Dan'l ower at Barnston Mains is guid for a handfu' o' thoosands ony day. Dan'l will-na see a puir man wranged that has perilled his life and property for the Guid Cause. Na, na. I can trust Dan'l!"

They were within a couple of hundred yards of the cave when Prayerful Peter suddenly resolved that he would lie up that day in Cobbs' Hole, another of their hiding-places some distance on the other side of Tantallon.

"What's the use o' mair nor ane o' us trailin' up the road to the cave," he said, "and guid kens wha may be spyin'? That puir lad there is in danger o' his neck, and a' them that's connectit wi' him will be in the same condemnation. It's surely enough that yin o' us should rin the risk?"

"Indeed, then, I weel ken what ane that will be!" said Long-bodied John with a secret grin.

Prayerful Peter raised another long sigh of relief from his breast as if by machinery.

"Ye are a fine lad, Lang John Paton," he said, "and if I should dee afore ye, ye shall receive the reward o' your faithfulness. Aye, that will ye!"

"But in the meantime," muttered John to himself, "ye tak' precious guid care that ye will be blythe and hearty even if I should swing in a tow!"

He opened the door of the cave on the rock and went in. It was, as aforesaid, the high tide of noon, and Raith sat up, suddenly blinded, on his bed of Flanders cloth. Long-bodied John pitched him a shirt, a pair of stockings, sea-boots, and a fisherman's knitted vest. "Try on thae things!" he said, "I'm thinkin' nane o' them will be ower sma' for ye, and if onything needs a reef ta'en up, there's some thread and a sail-needle in the locker yonder."

In spite of the nondescript nature of his attire it was not long before Raith stood up tall and handsome, and when his host had flung a pailful of spring water over his lodger's head, he watched him rubbing the close curls dry with a towel.

"Dod," he said to himself, "he's a good-lookin' blake—deil thrive him!"

And somehow he was glad that it was not at the cottage down yonder in the curve of Cantie Bay that Raith was to have his abode. For though to all appearance John did not raise his eyes twice a-day to Ivie's face, yet a great and sudden worship of the girl's beauty had arisen in his heart.

"And it wad be a gye cross-grained affair gin I was to save a lass's life, look at her till my e'en were fair dazzled wi' the bonny face o' her, and then draw anither lad oot o' the self-same water to tak' her awa' frae me!"

As Long John communed thus with himself, he was seated on an upturned basket of wattled willow. The thoughts which ran through his brain were not pleasant to Long John Paton.

He remembered now the scoffings of the soldiers at the Lobster-back, concerning his favour at the governor's house. What if he should also have gained favour with the governor's daughter? He resolved that he would fish for information, and if possible discover what were the feelings of Raith towards pretty Mistress Ivie, his uncle's guest down at the cottage in the bay.

Raith rolled up his sleeves and began to fill the toes of the boots with straw, whistling the while. His host had set on a goblet of porridge to boil on the clear charcoal fire which the Patons used for their small spirit still. Raith had begun to feel the faintness of hunger.

It was not till the platter of porridge and milk had been disposed of, and Long-bodied John was busy frying a freshly-caught flounder, that the conversation engaged.

"It would be a sore time that ye had o' it at the Bass?" queried John, sprinkling dry meal on the spattering fish.

Raith nodded with his mouth full of bread and butter.

"I saw them huntin' ye like a hare yesterday," he went on, "their guns were cracking like a joiner knockin' in nails in a puir man's coffin. It is a Guid's mercy ye are here to tell the tale!"

"Yes," said Raith, carelessly, "the rascals did hunt me close, but at least I had a double-barrelled horse-pistol and for a while I gave as good as I got or perhaps something better."

"Ony buryings amang them, think ye?"

"That I cannot say," smiled Raith, well-pleased enough with himself, "but I saw at least two go down like sacks of corn."

"Losh," said Long-bodied John, "dinna tell my uncle that. He is a man great for peace. And besides if they baith dee, that will be twa less rations to be sent to the Bass, and so a loss to his pocket! Na, say naething to him."

"I have not seen your uncle this morning," Raith interrupted, "to say either one thing or another to him."

He thought it curious that his chief host should appear so little.

Long-bodied John coughed suggestively.

"Young man," he said, "ye are verra snug where ye are. If I were you, I wad lie up here weel content. I can answer for your welcome. But I canna promise ye ony great wale o' visitors, and even my uncle may keep oot o' the road. He has mony things on his mind, ye see!"

"And you?" inquired Raith, looking up at the ill-proportioned figure before him with the glint of sleepy humour in the eyes. The long fisherman clasped his neck suggestively with both hands.

"A risk mair or less mak's little difference to John Paton," he said, "he is fairly deep in as it is! Resetting rebels and intercommuning wi' them—that's the Grassmarket and the hangman, as a' body kens!"

Then he recurred to the Bass again.

"Was there no a lass on the rock?" he inquired, with apparent indifference, "I heard it said that Peden cursed her, and that she was blawn awa' into the sea as a judgment for mocking at him. There wad be nae truth in that, I daresay."

"None," cried Raith, indignantly, "Mr. Peden spoke ever kindly to her. These are only the lies of my brother Beattie. He could never speak the thing that is, all his days. And now, I doubt not, he is lying his best before the Privy Council of Edinburgh."

"The lass would be a great miss to you on the Bass," suggested Long-bodied John, "her father would mourn her sore!"

"She was the world to him!" said Raith, sadly enough—"all he had."

"And you?" queried Long John Paton. Raith glanced up almost angrily. But catching the wistful look on his host's face he relented.

"None could be in her company long without—loving her."

"Ye loved her then?"

"Aye, and ever shall!"

"Why am I telling this to a stranger?" Raith growled to himself. But aloud he said, "She was very beautiful, but she neither cared for me nor for any man, except her father!"

Long-bodied John nodded with conviction.

"It is true," he said, "she was bonny—bonny ayont a' words, but she lookit prood. I saw her a time or twa doon at the landing-place wi' her faither, waiting for me to fetch the letters in!"

Without another word he melted away down the cliff, going noiselessly in spite of his great sea-boots, and Raith was left alone with his mind working. He must see Grif Rysland on his way back, and warn him of what had taken place at the Bass. It never entered his head that that perfect soldier Captain Grif could be revoked of his functions.

"The Privy Council may be cruel to poor wanderers," he thought, "but they cannot be altogether fools. Grif Rysland is worth an army!"

Then his mind returning upon Grif's daughter, it seemed to him that he could see her smile at him across the shining blue sea on which the northerly wind was bringing out short leaping surges of a dazzling whiteness. The smile of the dead girl seemed to dazzle him. He saw Ivie as he had seen her stand that first day, ringed with the yellow of spring about her wrists and making a coronet for her rippling hair.

How still seemed the rocky isle of the Bass to-day, set blue and hazy above its spreading plain of sea. Yesterday they had hunted him to take his life up across that pale greenish roof of turf, upon which to slip was to die. Desperately he had dived from these very cliffs into the sea, yet to-day he was safe in this shelter, waiting for he knew not what. His soldiering had come to a quick end. Grif Rysland had been called away, and who knew whether he would return any more to the Bass?

But—with a sudden hope and an upspringing of purpose, Raith remembered his father. He was yonder, with Mr. Peden and quiet Gil in the power of the same men who had tried so hard to slay him.

As he lay in the cave mouth there came from far the heavy, sullen detonation of cannon, one dull roar following the other. He could not understand the possible purport of such firing. The Westland men could never be attacking Edinburgh as they had attacked Glasgow after Drumclog! Raith lay and wondered rather lazily, caring little about the matter.

Meanwhile Long John Paton carried his great body and dangling arms shamblingly down the cliff towards the cottage. He had seen from an angle of the path Ivie wandering out upon the shore. It seemed to him that he ought to warn her to keep closer in to the house. He felt that he owed this to his uncle's interests. But he had also a question or two to ask—that is, if Ivie's smile did not reduce him to his usual vacant inanity in her presence. The simple fellow could talk about her to his uncle. When alone he could devise the most wonderful conversations with Ivie Rysland. But when he found himself face to face with Ivie herself, he was reduced to a gruff manner and monosyllabic replies.

Ivie was walking slowly to and fro on a strip of sand all ridged and rippled towards the sea, by the blowing of the wind from west to east.

"Mistress Ivie," said Long-bodied John, with an awkward salutation,—"there's ae thing I wad like to say to ye——"

"Only one, John?" smiled Ivie, who still retained a good deal of her ancient Eve; "why, I know many who would like as quiet a spot to say quite a number of things to me."

"Davert," thought John, nipping himself hard to provoke a repartee, "I should ken an answer to that. It's no the least use sayin' 'And so hae I!' For weel do I ken that Jock Paton could never get a word oot o' him—stupid blockhead that he is. If she wad only keep her e'en aff me! It's the wee sparks in them that does for me!"

Aloud he only remarked, "Umph!"

"But you had one thing to say, at least," suggested Ivie, "you know you said so yourself! Come—out with it. See, I am all in a tremble with suspense!"

"Did I no tell ye, Peter Paton," Long John's heart communed with itself, not un-rejoicefully, "that she's a'thegither different frae thae twa prood West country madams? I dinna think, after a', that a man wad be muckle pestered wi' brushes and besoms and washin's in *her* hoose."

Then Ivie, clasping her hands and with eyes mock petitionary, begged that John would deliver his message. She excused herself to her own conscience by the promise to tell Marjory Simpson as soon as she went within.

"Weel," said John, "then the truth is that ye shouldna be walkin' here in braid day if ye want to bide unkenned—as if ye were on the Bass wi' a reid sodjer ahint ye to do your will."

Long-bodied John's eyes glanced at Ivie's face. There was a shade of thoughtful sadness upon it, which somehow took John by the throat. But his expression cleared at her next words.

"After all," she said, softly, "it is scarcely well-done of me to leave my father so long in the belief that I am drowned."

"I'm thinking he will hae to bide a wee langer withoot kennin' that ye are fit for your meal o' meat," said John dryly. "At least till the Lords o' the Privy Council hae dune wi' him."

"Do you mean that my father is no longer Governor of the Bass?" demanded Ivie. "Speak out, man, say what you have to say clearly, as if you were speaking to a man."

"*As if he were speaking to a man!*" That was a good idea, but John felt that in order to carry it out he must shut his eyes.

"Aye, then," he said, taking courage, "it's true as preachin', Captain Grif was sent for by the King's Privy Council and has never comed back frae Edinburgh."

"Do you mean," cried Ivie, "that they have any crime to accuse him of?"

"Dod," said John, scratching his head, "it wasna my boat they took, and little do I ken aboot it. But they talk o' a letter that the men o' the garrison wrote, sayin' that he was a spy, and a Whig, and gied wine to the puir lads in the cells, and something aboot stickin' a man, a kind o' laird, I'm thinkin', doon i' the sooth country."

"I will go to him," cried Ivie, "I have been wicked, cruel, to stay so long!"

"Na, na," said Long-bodied John, sitting down on a large boulder on the shore, "ye are better bidin' where ye are, till we hear mair aboot your faither. It's me, ye see, that carries the news to and frae the Bass ilka day, as brawly ye ken. And if there's onything to hear aboot your faither, I'm the man to hear it. It's no for a young lass like you to rake the streets o' Edinburgh by your lane. Na, na, ilka ane to his trade. Bide where ye are, lassie, amang the ither weemen-folk and I'se bring ye speedy word—never fear."

"And the dragoon, Raith Ellison," said Ivie, after a pause, "did he accompany my father to Edinburgh?"

"Captain Grif left him in command o' the Bass," said Long-bodied John, watching Ivie furtively, for he had come to the heart of the matter now, "but I'm thinkin' a poor job he was like to hae o't. For they were a ragin' at his heels yesterday, making the bullets whistle aboot his lugs—aye, I was thinkin' that!"

Ivie's face whitened as she listened. "What a coward I was to stay away," she said, "when those who—who cared about me—were in trouble."

Long-bodied John took hold of Ivie's wrist with a curious compulsion, at once awkward and gentle.

"Na, na," he said, "bide ye, lassie, and hearken. Ye are a heap better where ye are, and your faither too will be glad when he kens. It's like this—when a man has a woman to think aboot in trouble, he canna daur and shoother and brange his way through, as he can when his hat covers his family. Believe me, Captain Grif is the better able to stand up to the Edinburgh Lord bodies, for no hae'in' a bonny young lass hingin' to his coat-tails. And as for the lad yonder on the heuchs, I'm guessin' that when he was keepin' a dozen o' them at bay wi' an auld horse-pistol ahint a rock, he was gye and thankfu' that ye had ta'en the first loup aff Hughie's Craig!"

"Do you mean that Raith Ellison fought the rascals yesterday?" Ivie asked, the little spark in her eyes kindling into a flame.

"I do that!" said Long-bodied John, "I had but a puir opeenion o' the lad afore—aye trottin' after women-folks' skirts——"

"Women-folks?" cried Ivie, speaking sharply.

"Weel then—yours, Mistress Rysland," said John sheepishly, "my thick fisher's tongue doesna aye get oot wi' what I would hae it say!"

"Then they did not kill him?" Ivie asked, a little breathlessly.

"Na, they didna," answered Long John Paton, coolly, "but I'm thinkin' there's some o' them that will be needin' a hole or twa stoppit wi' lint and ointment this mornin'!"

"Oh," said Ivie, "then I hope it is Old George Jex—that is, if it is anybody! But Raith Ellison, how did he escape, and where is he now?"

The countenance of the long-bodied fisherman lost its glow of intelligence.

"Eh, but," he said, "it wad tak' wiser folk than me to tell ye that. What I do ken is only that the lad won safe awa' wi' the life in him—though, they say, no wi' muckle mair."

"He will have gone to look for my father," she meditated; "Heaven pity those poor rascals when Raith Ellison and my father come back!"

John did not tell her that, by the common report, it was little likely that either of them would ever set foot on the Bass again as soldier of the King. As Ivie and Jock went towards the house they met Prayerful Peter with the laden look of one who has heavy tidings to divulge. Long John Paton stared to see him about the shore at that hour of the day.

"Are you not afraid that the soldiers will grip ye?" he demanded of his uncle generally so fearful.

"The sodjers will hae something else to think of," replied the elder. "The blow has fallen. The man of iniquity has filled up his cup to the brim. THE KING IS DEAD."

They were dumb for a moment. From the far distance, beyond the fog in which lay Edinburgh, came again the throb of that distant cannonade.

"They are proclaiming the new King," said Long-bodied John, "the Papist James. Lord send we may mak' a better of it!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

THE CUP AND THE LIP

LONG-BODIED JOHN's incomplete tale of the peril and escape of Raith did not at all satisfy Ivie Rysland. The news of the death of one king and of the accession of another did not concern her, nor did she consider what effect the event might have on the fate of her father. Grif Rysland had always kept her with his sword, and though she desired and had perhaps found another way—the Way of loving Woman—yet the ties of blood proclaimed themselves strongly so soon as she knew of her father's danger.

Nor did Marjory Simpson forbid. She was a wise woman and knew that blood held to blood at the end.

"Bairn," she said, "the fisher lad was right. Bide—it's little good ye could do your father. The Lord will deliver him in his time. I have over yonder two—one in Edinburgh, in as perilous a plight as your father—besides Raith, out there on the Bass, with the livery of the oppressor on his back."

"He is not there—they have chased him away. He has escaped out of their hands."

The news came from Ivie's lips like a cry so suddenly that Euphrain drifting silently in, as was her wont, stood amazed before them. Marjory Simpson had risen, her grey hair tossed back with a sudden gesture. There was a fierce and eager look on her face.

"What?" she cried, "what do you say? That he has left them? Tell me all."

And when Ivie told her all she had gathered from unwilling Jack Paton Marjory Simpson broke into a torrent of glad tears.

"A mother's prayers are not in vain—no, not in vain," she said. "Oh, how I have prayed, black black nights and long."

"But," said Ivie, by no means so satisfied, "I do not know what is become of him—or even if he has reached any place of safety."

His mother swept aside the objection with her hand. It had no weight with her.

"Death is nothing," she said; "it is life in an ill service that kills the soul. Now he will be spared to come back to his own again. He will seek the Way. I, an unworthy servant, thank the Lord for an answered prayer."

And from that it was impossible to move her. Raith might be wounded, dying, dead—no matter. He had cast their bonds from him and come forth. He had left his mark on the enemy.

"I think it was my father's horse-pistol," said Ivie, practically. And lo, such was the power of a covenanting mother's love that even Grif Rysland became instantly glorified by the fact.

"It may be—I cannot be sure of anything, save of the Lord's unfailing mercies," she said, "but somehow it keeps coming up in my mind that by means of your father we shall yet all be saved—aye, and he with us."

Euphrain gave a little shudder. It tried her sorely to hear her mother speak well of malignants, and especially of the man who had first led her brother astray.

Ivie caught a little piece of Valenciennes lace about her head, a present from Long Jock in one of his hours of unwonted expansion.

"Hae!" he had said, "that's an odd bit. Tak' it. It's nae use!"

But Ivie with natural taste had made use of it to throw round her shoulders at night when she went wandering on the shore, or to shade her head from the sun in the daytime. Then Long-bodied John, his eyes twinkling with pleasure at his own shrewdness, murmured within himself over and over, "That's fell bonny! It was me that gied it to her!"

And the repetition would make him happy for all day.

Down on the shore Ivie found no one. She wanted to see Jock, in order to talk to him again. She would even have been grateful for Prayerful Peter, but that worthy lay up in Cobbs' Hole on the other side of Tantallon, and rarely appeared near Cantie Bay except for meals.

Ivie looked under her hand this way and that, scanning the cliffs for any signs of life. Nothing was to be seen. Then it came to her that she must get to some place from which she could see the Bass. Perhaps—it was just possible—she might be able to see something of Raith Ellison—a boat with a single fugitive, anything to take the edge off her apprehension of bloodshed and death.

She mounted the grassy heuchs diagonally, picking the easiest way and the same time remembering Long Jock's admonitions to keep herself well concealed. Up and up she went, the great blue-grey pyramid of rock out in the Firth rising with her till at last she could see the white lines of the fortifications and even the tiny jutting spar of the crane, no bigger than a perch in a bird-cage. All seemed quiet. There was no jetting smoke that day about the rocks. Not a soul was moving. Even the birds were strangely still.

A little higher and she would be able to see the landing-place. Perhaps the soldiers of the garrison had manned the boats and were still in pursuit. She mounted slowly, her eyes seaward.

* * * * * *

"*God in his heaven—Ivie!*"

She turned at the words, and there at a cave's mouth stood Raith, pale as death, his hand on his heart as if about to faint on the spot. He leaned against the rough rock-lintel. She took a step or two forward. He put out his hand involuntarily as if to ward her off.

"You—have come back," he gasped, "you have a message—for me!"

Ah, she had forgotten! Of course he had long thought of her as dead. To him she must appear as a spirit. But with the quick instinct of the loving woman she did the right thing to reassure him.

She laughed—a clear, rippling laugh that showed her milk-white teeth. Then she held out her hand frankly as if she had bidden him goodnight only twelve hours before.

"Do you think you are the only one who can jump into the sea from Hughie's rock, and be the better of it?" she cried, gaily.

He stood still, speechless, till persuaded by the warm touch of her hand that she was indeed no spirit.

"Well, since I am here," she continued, "have you nothing to say to me? Or would you rather go down at once and see your mother and Euphrain?"

"My mother and Euphrain?" he gasped once more. Ivie smiled again, less brilliantly, but perhaps more sweetly.

"*My* mother too now," she said, "she has been willing to adopt me!"

Ah, it was delightful to Raith to hear her say that. Yet—wait—if she had had any thought of him, would she have spoken like that? Discouraged and gloomy he looked about him, avoiding her eyes.

"Where are they?" he asked baldly. She pointed downward with her hand. "There," she said, "in the cottage in Cantie Bay!"

"And did that long fellow Paton know—the man who brought me here?" he inquired.

"Certainly," said Ivie, "it is his uncle's house. We cook their meals and keep the house clean."

"Ah," said Raith, "I must think about this. He never told me, either about my mother—or about you!"

"That," said the girl, "was doubtless his uncle's orders. They would know that you had been a soldier, and as your mother and Euphrain are staying here to assist the escape of the prisoners, it would be their policy to keep you apart."

"It may be," said Raith, "but I think there was something else too."

At which the girl smiled secretly, for Long-bodied Jock's adoration was, of course, an old story to her.

Raith and she sat down on the little worn seat within the arch of the Cove, but without the door.

"You do not tell me how you came to be saved?" he said, after a pause.

"I thought you knew," she answered; "it was Long John Paton who fished me out of the water beneath Hughie's Craig. Why, did he not tell you?"

"He never whispered a word of the matter, even though he did as much for me!"

"It seems, then," she went on, "that both of us owe our lives to him!"

"Not only our lives," Raith exclaimed, generously, "but clothing, shelter, food—which makes it all the stranger why he should wish to keep us apart!"

"Does it?" she said meekly, fixing her dark eyes upon him. Men were so alike to her, so vain, yet so simple.

But there was something daunting in Ivie's eyes, something arresting, tempting, intoxicating, not long to be endured unmoved.

Impulsively Raith caught her in his arms.

"You kissed me once," he said, hoarsely, "for the sake of my father, you said."

He had got so far when a voice interrupted, "So now you would kiss Ivie for the sake of *her* father! Well, he will save you the trouble, young man. He will kiss her himself."

They looked up, and there quite near them in a plain dark suit and burgher's hat, but with his long sword still by his side, stood Grif Rysland, humorously smiling. Ivie fell rather than threw herself into his arms.

"Father," she said, "I am so sorry! Forgive me!"

He affected to make light of the whole matter.

"Sorry," he cried, patting her shoulder, "what—sorry that this young man did not have time to carry out his intentions? Well, he is young. Who can say what may yet be before him?"

"But how did you find—*us?*" she hesitated over the pronoun, which told so much, at least to Raith, "I only found him quite by chance!"

"I saw you go up the cliff," said Grif Rysland, "so I followed you."

"But you thought I was drowned—ah, it was so wicked of me! Only I could not help it."

"Girls seldom can," he said, "when there is only their fathers to think of. But to ease your mind, there's an old fellow not far away who can sit leg on each side of the dyke with any man, who kept my mind easier than you might have thought. It took some gold pieces out of a poor soldier's pouch to do it, but still, I will not say it was not worth it."

Prayerful Peter had seen his way to an extra profit, by privately assuring the Governor of the Bass of his daughter's safety in return for the payment for that daughter's board, which he thus received in double. Heaven made a point of blessing Peter's basket and store.

"I heard that you were very happy—with the devout!" said Grif. Ivie's face fell, more at the tone than at the words.

"Do not laugh, father," she said quickly. "I have changed my mind about many things. And so will you, when you see and know."

He smiled, but did not laugh any more. His eyes were even sad.

"I am old and tough," he said, "I do not change my mind easily. A stout heart, a good sword, an easy wrist, and a keen eye will take a man through most things. The rest is mostly for women."

"Why are you dressed like this?" she said, rubbing her fingers over the plain dark cloth of his coat,—"not even a tassel to your sword hilt? Wait till I get down. I will make you a beauty!"

"I think not," he said, "I must go afield to seek some other service. I am no longer Governor of the Bass, nor yet soldier of the King. I have gotten both fee and leave. Moreover, Charles the King is dead, and to James his brother I owe no loyalty!"

"You are not a soldier, father?" exclaimed Ivie, scarcely believing her ears.

"I did not say so," he answered, "I shall remain a soldier till I die. I am only out of work, that is all. I owe no allegiance to any man." (He turned to Raith at this point.) "But how came *you* here, and in these togs, Mr. Interim-Governor of the Bass?"

Grif Rysland listened while Raith told his tale. His eyes grew cold and hard as he nodded quickly at each point—the conspiracy to kill Raith as he returned through the main guard, the escape over the slippery short grass of the plateau, the long afternoon chase, the shooting, the closing in and gradual forcing over the cliffs.

"And what had you to defend yourself?" Grif demanded suddenly. His lips were tight closed and his jaw grim. His face was not now pleasant to see.

"Only the double-barrelled pistol you gave me," said Raith. "I fear I hurt one or two of them."

"Fear!" cried Grif Rysland; "heavens, man, I hope you blew them to—ahem—Ivie! I mean I hope that Raith did not miss his mark. Who were the black mutineers?"

"The Glasgow 'keely' and the Englishman," said Raith.

"What, Tyars?" cried the ex-governor, "I had thought better of him."

"So did I," confessed Raith, "but they would never have driven me to jump off Hughie's rock but for him. They had not even brains enough to keep the higher ground and pepper me with no danger to themselves."

"Ah!" said Grif, as if making a mental note, "Tyars was it? Very well, Tyars!"

His daughter caught him by the arm.

"But, father," she said, "you are never thinking of going back to that place? They would kill you. They would never let you land—alone and without authority."

Her father smiled and patted her head.

"I have not yet made up my mind what I shall do," he said. "This young man and I will, I hope, live to do many things together. But if we do go to the Bass, these rascals shall not guess at the fact till we have them gripped as a terrier grips a rat."

After this Grif sat for some time silent, thinking deeply, his eyes on the blue cone of the rock.

"For the present we will let all be as it is," he said, "only I will go down with you to the cottage and you can introduce me to the Ellisons as your father. Nay, lad," he said, his hand laid soothingly on Raith's arm, "I am no soldier of the King now, and what I hear shall not be noted with an ear official. Perhaps—who knows?—the outcome may be gladsome for all of us. For you, Raith boy, bide here where you are and say not that you have seen either father or daughter. The long-bodied fisher chap will say as little, or I am much mistaken. His tongue only wags when he wills."

"And sometimes not then!" interposed Ivie, smiling with subtlety.

And both the men wondered what she meant.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

THE SILVER-HILTED SWORD

"My father!" said Ivie Rysland with a gentle pride, introducing Grif to mother and daughter. They were in the small "ben" room of the cottage, under the window, which, when opened on fine days as at present, revealed the glittering water, as far as the cliffs and skerries about Tantallon.

Marjory Simpson looked up with her habitual calm. Perhaps her face hardened a little, but the work of Euphrain fell to the ground. She carried her hand to her throat and a pallor overspread her countenance. No, it was not possible—this handsome man of stature a little above the middle, quietly dressed in dark cloth like any burgher or city merchant. (He had hung his sword up in the hall along with his hat.) His black hair, a little touched with grey, was gathered behind his head and tied with a broad band of silk in the Dutch fashion. There was a quiet respect and kindliness about him which neither woman had expected.

The elder shook hands at once, but the younger put her hands behind her. No king's soldier should touch the palm of Euphrain Ellison, even if he was disguised in a black coat.

There was a moment's awkwardness, and then Marjory Simpson spoke.

"We came hither to be near my husband and my sons in their prison on the Bass, of which I understand you are the governor. We should be glad to afford them what assistance we can. I trust there is no wrong?"

Her voice shook a little. It would be hard if she were now to be sent back to Edinburgh, or cut off from all communication with her blind husband and her sons in their prison.

"Madam," said Grif Rysland, "have no fear. You have kept and succoured my daughter. For that I owe you more than a poor soldier can pay. It is true that I was for some time Governor of the Bass. Once too I was a soldier of the King. But now I am neither. The Privy Council relieved me of one office, and the King's death delivered me from any oath of allegiance I have sworn. Now I am only a man, glad to have found my daughter and grateful for your care of her. I am sure this young lady's society has been most comforting. Indeed it must have been, or Mistress Ivie would not have left me so long without news of her."

He looked at Euphrain as he spoke, a deep, quiet, penetrating gaze—full of kindliness and real gratitude. Euphrain flushed under it. There was something curiously disconcerting about this man's eyes. She longed to be gone, and yet oddly enough she lingered.

Every moment her mother expected her to break out against all who had favoured the persecution, but instead Euphrain sat down again at her mother's feet, and silently resumed her work without looking up.

"I hear you have been to Edinburgh, Captain," said Marjory Simpson.

"Call me Grif," he said, "that is plainest and best. I have presently no military title."

"Well then, Master Grif," said Marjory, with her usual quiet readiness, "heard you anything of my son Beattie since you went thither? He was under your care at the Bass, but the night before you went to Edinburgh he was carried off by King's officers."

Grif nodded without a smile.

"As to that I can relieve your mind," he said, seriously. "I do not think he is in the slightest danger. And at present he is even released from his imprisonment."

Euphrain glanced up quickly at her mother.

"Pray God he hath not denied the faith!" she said.

Both the women looked at Grif Rysland as if he could answer the unspoken question.

"I only know he was put to lodge with the officer of the Privy Chamber," he said, guardedly, "and also that there is no danger to his life—not so much indeed as to my own."

At his words the flush died out of Euphrain's face and left it pale. She stole one quick glance at Grif Rysland, as if to find out if indeed he were telling all the truth. But he was still looking at her fixedly and her eyes dropped instantly. She would find out. She would question him, even if her mother dared not. She would know if Beattie——

She did not dare to put her suspicion into words, even to herself.

Altogether Grif Rysland made a very favourable impression on the two women, as indeed he could do when he tried. The black brows which knotted so darkly when it was a matter of quarrelling with men, or at the crossing of his will in the performance of duty, were now smooth, open, and placable.

Euphrain rose and went out leaving her mother and Ivie with the newcomer. As she went through the little passage which served for a division between the lower rooms and also for the foot of the ladder by which one mounted to the tiny garrets above, she shivered with a curious fear at the sight of the long dangling sword with the worn waist-belt of black leather, clasped here and there with flat silver clasps and buckles. It was hanging sideways and she pulled the sword out a little way, and read the beginning of the "ANDREA F——" on the blade. He had fought with that—perchance he had killed a man with that sword—nay, almost certainly. Had not Raith seen him slay the Laird of Houston, a great strong roaring man of whom all the country-side stood in terror, slay him with one blow, in the quarry on the edge of the Kerslan Wood?

Euphrain had never seen anything like that sword before. It seemed so purposeful, so much a part of the man. She began almost to wish that he had worn his uniform, and tried to imagine Sergeant Major Grif as she had once or twice seen him ride by on his way to Irongray, crossing the water at the ford with a gay lift of his hand to the reapers in the field and a guiding shout to his men behind him.

It is strange, but Euphrain had never had any love affair, and knew not in the least what the symptoms were like. So nothing told her to beware of harbouring curiosity in the matter of a long silver-hilted sword, with an Andrea Ferrara blade.

But shame rushed to her face in a flood of crimson when the chamber-door opened silently and the owner of the weapon appeared, drawing the little cottage latch close after him. Euphrain actually emitted a little cry. She had the blade so far out of the scabbard that the heavy hilt would have overbalanced, and the whole might have fallen to the ground had not Grif, who did everything with swift and silent speed, caught it as it fell. With a single movement, as it seemed to Euphrain, and without the least consciousness, he girt the sword-belt about him, the silver tongue of the buckle clicking smoothly into its place.

"Thank you," he said, "I had hung it up stupidly."

"No—I—I—I," began Euphrain. But she could get no farther.

"Would you like to see it?" he said, drawing the long blade from its sheath with a *wisp* of exquisitely fitted metal.

"Oh no—no," she would have said, but could not.

The tall man with the shining eyes and the grey curls crisp about his temples, explained to the girl the beautiful temper of the blade, the clean true line of the edge, and the beautiful carved work upon the hilt. Euphrain took courage. She heard the other two talking safely within. They at least would not come out and catch her. This was all a fearful, a perilous joy. Nothing like it had come her way before.

"Have you ever killed a man with this?" she asked, faintly, finding her words at last.

Grif Rysland's quick ear caught the anxiety in her voice.

"Perhaps," he said; "you see I have been long a soldier, and fought many battles, but never in this country."

He had fought many battles. He had slain men. Yes, as she looked at him she was sure that he must. Of course he was bound to be the victor. Who could stand against him?

"Oh, if only——" she began, and then she stopped—her face aflame.

"If only what?" he asked smiling. But, poised in act to flee, she would not tell him. Only he stood directly in her way. Having gone almost to the outer door to look at the sword, she could neither return to her mother, nor yet mount to her chamber without passing this formidable man of war and weapons.

"I thought," she said, taking her courage in both hands, "that if only a great soldier like you would fight for the True Cause—then indeed we might triumph."

"Well," he said, something of humour coming into his voice, "perhaps I might if the pay were good!"

He added under his breath, "And if I only knew which *was* the Good Cause!"

"The pay"—Euphrain caught fire instantly, the daughter of William Ellison speaking within her,—"the reward of iniquity may buy Aceldama, the field of Blood, but thirty pieces of silver cannot buy the breadth of a foot in the New Heavens and the New Earth!"

"You mistake me," said Grif Rysland, far more gently than any would have expected of him, "I only meant that all payment is not made in coined money. If I were sure——" He stopped and looked keenly at the girl, who, the light fading from her eyes and cheek, looked steadily upon the ground. "No—no," he went on, "I am an old man. It is folly. More need for me to think of sheathing my sword rather than of drawing it anew. That at least is permitted even by your law."

"It is true," she said, sadly and reluctantly; "of a certainty it is written—'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace . . . against such there is no law!'"

"Ah," he repeated her words a little wistfully, "love, joy, peace—but where, I pray you, shall Grif Rysland find these?"

Euphrain stood at the door and watched him go up the cliff path and turn the corner.

"It is all so different," she said, "I thought to hate him—I was so sure. I could have struck him in the face at first. An old, cruel, wicked man, that is what I imagined. And now—he is not old—not so old even as Gil to look at. He is not cruel, though he has been a soldier. And, oh, whatever he says, I am sure that he is not wicked!" Then she sighed.

"I wish he had left that sword behind," she said, "there was a spot on the handle. I am sure I could have got it out—without his knowing."

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

COUNTERPLOT

"Ah," said Grif Rysland, with a sigh, sinking into the corner of the worn cliff-seat which uncle and nephew had used so long, till, indeed, the smell of rough sea-clothes hung about its polished curves even in windy weather. "Ah, I have lost Ivie!"

Raith paled and his heart gave a great leap. What was her father about to say?

"You mean——" he began, "you mean——?"

"I mean the women have gotten her—body and soul—they have taken her from me. Oh, it is just and right. She has been too long among men. And as for religion, God knows I never had any of my own to teach her. But though she never knew Credo from Creed, nor Paternoster from Assembly's Catechism she was always better than I. It would have been an insult for me or any man to teach her anything."

"She is as an angel of heaven," said Raith, warmly. Her father looked at him curiously.

"Hardly—well, not altogether," he smiled at the enthusiasm of the young man; "several of your sex and age have not been of that opinion—at least not to finish with. But Ivie is a good, a true maid. I never saw that she needed aught else. But the hearts of women are different. They yearn for respect—for commonplace Madame This and Mistress That to approve of them—even for their place in a circle of gossips all busy with tongue and needle over their several seams! Ivie too—my Ivie, that once would wake bright as a bird every morning by five o' the clock, and out to the stables to comb my war-charger's tail. Ah, poor Gustavus, she made it like spun silk floating in the wind!"

"Her own hair is like that," murmured the young man, as if to himself.

"Like my horse's tail, sir?" said Grif, turning upon him sharply. "I hope you do nit say the like to the lady herself. I can tell you she has been used to compliments much more prettily turned. But—no matter, all that is over now. The women have taken her. She is not a man's possession any more."

He looked down at his sober-coloured dress with a curious sadness and even pity for himself.

"And you, Grif Rysland," he went on, "what better are you? An alderman of the ward in all but the waistcoat slope—your coat, as it might be, made for a bailiff—your sword a maid's plaything—ah——!"

He lost himself in thought, rubbing his thick frosty hair absently. "But, indeed it is time," he said, "we will hang Andrea up. You, Raith, shall hammer in the nail. I will blunt his edge. We will gie him to the bairns to play with—ah, no, not that. But we will hang him up all the same—'Love, joy, peace, against such there is no law!' So she said!"

"Who said?" interrupted Raith.

Grif glared at him. He had been thinking aloud.

"I did not say any one said——" he retorted rudely, almost in his old manner.

"It sounded like a text," said Raith, to excuse himself, "like—like my father."

"Well, what the worse of that?" exclaimed Grif, impatiently. "I do not know but your father has the right end of the string—he—and the others."

Raith looked wistfully over at the Bass.

"I wish they were well out of that," he said, "the brutes I left behind will be starving them—perhaps torturing them!"

Grif's eyes narrowed and glittered in the shadow.

"To hunt the man that I, Grif Rysland, made my representative!" he said. "If it were not for—I would teach them. They shot at you. I can hear the whistle of every bullet. Would have bled you like a sheep—the mutinous knife was set at my own throat. Zounds (he rose hastily to his feet) I will teach them—we will give Andrea one last turn for luck, ere we knock up that nail in the wall to hang him on. What say you, Raith Ellison?"

Raith's face brightened with joy and content absolute.

"Captain," he said, "I have not been all my life a soldier like you—Nevertheless, where you go, I can follow!"

Grif was thinking, swiftly, keenly, analysing and deciding.

"The prisoners, too!" he continued, "what of them? Now, I am under no oath. I am no longer in the King's service. I owe no fealty to this man James or to the Privy Council which deprived me. We will free them—what say you? Will you risk it—your blind father, your elder brother, Peden the Prophet, and the rest? What say you?"

Something had moved Grif Rysland that afternoon. Raith looked at him a little terrified, not because of the adventure but at the change in the man.

"What Grif Rysland holds honourable for him to attempt, is good enough for Raith Ellison to do," he answered promptly.

And with that they struck hands upon it.

"I am an honest man," said Grif Rysland, lazily stretching himself so as to get both legs into the sun, "I pay my debts. I owe something to the government of this country, which has taken its use of me and then cast me off like an old shoe—nay, not with half so much ceremony. I owe still more to those rascals on the Bass, for their lying letter to the Council and for their mutiny against you!"

"Never mind about that," said Raith smiling; "thanks to your old horse-pistol, they got more than they gave!"

"That," answered his chief, "has nothing to do with it. I was Governor of the Bass. Being called away, I made over my authority to you. Instantly my back was turned they plotted murder and mutiny. Either I will teach them a lesson, or Grif Rysland will find peace and rest in his last long sleep!"

An uncertain foot came up the path, and Prayerful Peter started back at the sight of the newcomer.

"Never be shy, Peter," said Grif, "come your ways, man! I have much to say to you. You are a true man—when well enough paid. I have strolled down from Edinburgh to see what can be done in the matter of the Bass. It is, as you know, overrun by a crew of rascally mutineers."

"Aye," said Prayerful Peter, "and the deil's ain trouble I hae to get a silver groat oot o' them. But noo when ye are here, Captain Grif, they will be sma' sma' men—aye, they will sing to a minor tune!"

"I do not wish to be known as governor of the Bass," said Grif Rysland, "but my duty is to take the place out of these rascals' bloody hands. And I call upon you to aid me."

"Me!" exclaimed Prayerful Peter, edging away as if he meditated a bolt down the path, "ye ken brawly I am nae fechter. I am aye man o' peace and hae been ever since I was a wee callant rinnin' the sands and howkin' for crabs. When ither callant oppressed me or hit me, I never did ony thing but greet—at the time. But after, I aye keeled him wi' a stane ahint a dyke, or maybes pushed a stack o' corn on the tap o' him when he wasna lookin'!"

Grif laughed heartily.

"No—no," he said reassuringly, "I was far from expecting you to help us to take the Castle of the Bass by storm and escalade. Ye shall never quit the firm ground on this side——"

"'Deed that will I no!" said Prayerful Peter, with intense conviction.

"And all that you will have to do, is just to hold your tongue."

"That I am well used to doing," said Peter, grinning.

"You must, however, supply us with some arms, and a boat or two, manned by somebody you can trust."

"Arms—," said Peter, shaking his head, "that is dangerous talk. Nae body kens better than your Excellency——"

"Hang his Excellency. I want none of it. I tell you once for all," cried Grif Rysland.

"Weel," said Peter, "ye ken at ony rate that a' arms offensive and defensive are forbidden under the severest pains and penalties. The farmers' barns and steadings have been searched to their very sarkings not once but thirty times!"

"And that," said Grif Rysland, threatening Peter with his finger, "is the exact reason why *you* will have the whole store hidden away somewhere among your coves and shelters that the devil himself could not follow all the nooks and windings of."

Peter Paton wagged the tufted semi-circle of beard which he wore like a ruff under his chin. He knotted his brows with an air of doubt.

"It will tak' siller," he said, "the like o' that! There's siccan a risk to be run, besides a' the detriment to the weapons!"

"Hark ye, Peter, no more of that," cried Grif sternly, the black knot beginning to gather warningly, "I will stand good for all. You know I have done as much before and that I do not break my word. Let us see the arms and ammunition."

"They are no here," said Peter, guardedly, "ye couldna expect it. My nevvy and me will bring them frae whaur they lie. This is a place far ower public for the like o' that! But—there's nae thing that puir auld Peter wadna do for you, Captain Grif, though he does it at a great risk to his neck. But I ken a true gentleman. Aye, I ken him. He aye tak's the like o' that into accoont on settlin' day!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

GRIF RYSLAND'S SWORD KNOT

The material of warfare and the price thereof were at last settled with Prayerful Peter, who showed himself as usual an excellent hand at a bargain and took in the two soldiers most shamefully. But the real preparation had to be done by means of Long-bodied John, who had none of his uncle's scruples about personal risks.

"Mind ye," he said, frankly, "I'm no sayin' that I am muckle good oot o' a boat, but Allister and the ither twa fisher lads are aye on the rock. I can mak' a' right wi' them. If it hadna been for them, never a Covenant billy in the cells but wad hae had his throat cut lang syne and followed ye ower Hughie's Craig! But the thieves kenned weel that withoot Allister they wad get nae tobacco and but few stores, no to speak o' a drap o' usquebaugh and Hollands for their thrapples. Mair nor that, there will be me and my cousin Gutsy Gregory to bide by the boats. Gregory is nae great hand, mair than mysel' at scrammlin' on rocks or shooting wi' a loaded gun. But he can haud a boat steady when a twenty-gallon cask is comin' doon ower fast on the Castle 'cran'—And maybe ye will find that juist as usefu'!"

It was by Long Paton's means also that Grif and Raith got into touch with half-a-dozen daring lads of the neighbourhood, who were willing to share any adventure, yet who, being of good family and wishing to bring no discredit on their own, could be trusted to hold their tongues afterwards. Two of these were Simpsons, cousins of Euphrain's from the farm of Nether Barnston over the hill.

To these lads nothing was said as to the purpose of Grif in chastising the garrison of the Bass for their mutiny and attempted murder of Raith. The release of the prisoners, especially of the Ellisons and Mr. Peden, was the bait held out.

It was understood that the secret was to be sacredly kept. None save those actually risking their lives were to be informed. And in especial no woman was to hear a whisper of the matter.

Yet since Grif Rysland had business each day down at the Cottage the matter of secrecy was not so simple as it appeared. He went down to see Ivie, but he talked to Euphrain and her mother. In particular there was one tree at the corner of a small and bedraggled garden of pot-herbs fenced about from wandering cattle by tarred ribs of boats and split thwarts, and wattled together with long sea-grass out of the bunkers on the shore. Under shade of this, Euphrain often sat on hot afternoons. The dark little room wherein her mother sat talking to Ivie, seated on a stool at Marjory Simpson's feet, made her head ache. So she went and sat under the stunted oak, its branches all bent away from the sea by the blasts of winter. It made a good enough shelter however from the sun, and it was here generally that Grif Rysland found her. He did not wear his sword now, and had assumed a blue bonnet instead of a broad hat. But for all that he looked alert and clean-lined and soldierly in spite of his burghal costume.

"You have laid aside your sword," she said, looking at him a little disappointed, "I would rather see you draw it against the enemies of the King!"

"Which King?" he asked, softly.

"My King!" she answered him, looking up with a bold proud look in her eyes, which must once on a time have been her father's.

"Will you, then, venture to enlist me?" he said, still very low.

"I do enlist you," she answered, fire on her face. "There is but one battle worth fighting—but one prize worth winning——"

"Ah!" said Grif Rysland, suddenly.

"You will deliver the prisoners?" she asked, not thinking it wise to pursue her meditation.

"I will try. I have promised in company with your—cousins!" He had been on the point of saying 'brother.' But for the present, he had thought it better to conceal from all but Ivie the proximity of the prodigal son of the Mayfield family.

"After the prisoners are safely out of danger, we shall see!" he told himself. And indeed it was time enough. For the present he interdicted any commerce between the cove and the cottage, a prohibition which sat specially heavy on Raith, who had nothing to do all day but to set out the ammunition, to overhaul and clean the muskets, pistols and other weapons, and especially for long hours together to look over the cliff, lying prone on his breast and chin, to watch for Ivie as she walked up and down the sand with her father deep in talk. Once or twice she raised her head and glanced upward in the direction of the cove, and that was all poor Raith got for his pains.

Had Raith known of the interviews under the old scrunted oak tree at the corner of the yard, he might have had yet more reason to complain. But the culprits were entirely sheltered from his gaze and so the matter passed unseen. As for Grif, he excused himself thus: "They are young things, with all their lives before them. A little waiting will do them good—he basking up in the cove like a lizard on a rock, and she stretching her neck to see round corners down here on the beach. But for me, I am an old man, and it must be now or never."

Like most excuses, this completely satisfied the excuse-maker. For the others, also as usual, they did not count.

It was the day before the great attempt. The assault was to be made in the dark time of the moon. Long-bodied John had taken over a good cargo of brandy the night before, and on his return had foretold that, barring Allister and his two mates (who would only drink in reason), there would not be a sober man on the rock for twenty-four hours. John had, however, left word that if the garrison wanted any more beer they must have all the empty barrels waiting for the boats next night, so that he might carry them to the brewery where they could be refilled.

"There will be one man sober enough for that, anyway," the long-bodied one prophesied, "George Jex will see to the beer, or I am a Dutchman!"

That afternoon then, recruiting-sergeant Euphrain, more zealous than ever for the Good Cause, had gone out earlier than usual to the shadow of the oak tree. It was a burning day, very still, the sky of a white glimmering heat through which far-away objects could be seen of a warm pink—an effect not uncommon in the later heats on the east coast of Scotland.

Grif Rysland, appearing suddenly without noise as if he had dropped out of the white lift above, greeted Euphrain. The girl lifted her eyes. She had been thinking, seriously, gravely, with a soft dignity as ever. Something about Euphrain's steady conviction always silenced the jest on Grif's tongue when he came near her. As usual, he told himself that she made him feel a better man. But the doubt—how she would receive the remark, kept him from repeating a commonplace of lovers. "You are ours—our soldier?" she said, keeping her vaguely troublous grey eyes on him fixedly.

"Yours!" he corrected.

"Mine, why mine?" She regarded him wonderingly.

"Because," said Grif Rysland, "I am going for your sake to do something that, had any one told me of it a week ago, I should have stricken him in the face. I am going to release prisoners held in prison by the law of the land."

"Nay," she said, "say rather shamefully and cruelly imprisoned and tortured by unjust persecutors, without trial or warrant!"

"Perhaps," he said, gently, "I believe it because you say so. I do the thing for your sake."

"Why do you tell me this?" she said, "it would be more fitting to say that it was for the sake of justice, for the sake of right, for the sake of the Cause!"

"But, you being a woman and I a man, we know that it is not because of any of these—but wholly for your sake. *Because I love you, Euphrain!*"

The colour mounted hotly to her cheek. Being, as he said, a woman, it could not but make her happy to hear such a man speak thus. "For her sake"—never any one had said that to her before. She ought to have wished it otherwise. But somehow she did not.

He stood a while silent regarding her. She had never been beautiful save in the stillest fashion, like an autumn afternoon in an orchard when the sun is shining. Nevertheless she was beautiful now, the light flecking her hair, and all her face transfigured with the wonder of being loved.

"I may never come back," he continued, "that may very well be. Nay, perhaps it is even probable. Will you give me nothing before I go—no token?"

She paused a long while, red and white by turns. Then from under a heap of scattered linen which lay on the grass, she lifted up—Grif Rysland's sword.

"There was a spot or two on it,"—she blushed hotly as she faltered an explanation, "there on the hilt—I have cleaned them. And here"—she put up her hand and undid the broad blue ribbon of the covenant from her hair. Then she tied it in a little bow-knot, threading it with trembling fingers through the silver filigree of the hilt.

"I give you that!" she said. And fled fleet of foot to the house, leaving him standing rapt with the sheathed sword and jangling belt in his hand.

Euphrain's gage was her own maiden snood. That is to say, it was the promise of herself.

CHAPTER THIRTY

PRISON BREAKING

DARK, infinitely spangled night—the sea beneath purple black. As they advanced the rock rose gradually up into the zenith till it shut out the Pleiades, a huge formless velvety shape. It was the eve of the great venture.

The two boats moved silently with only a little sail set in the bow so that the trail of phosphorescent wake might not be seen from the rock. Bubbles winked now and then as the breeze freshened. The freeboard leaned over for a moment to the chopping clatter of the little waves, but for the most part there was all about, the stillness of the ultimate peace.

On the Bass not a light was to be seen, not a lantern going to and fro, no gleam even from the bayonet of the soldier pacing his beat along the terrace walk.

"All drunk—drunk as owls," commented Jock of the long body who had his reasons for knowing; "that brandy was strong enough to account for twenty such."

"Old George would keep awake to ship the empty beer barrels, though," said the younger of the Simpson lads. "That I will wager! We shall find him growling and fuming as usual."

"Murderous hound!" muttered Grif Rysland between his teeth.

The soft lap of waves made itself heard along the outlying rocks. The oars of both boats were put out to keep way on them when the little scraps of sail were taken in forward. Long-bodied John put both hands to his mouth conch-fashion and sent a long piercing shout upwards. Thrice the call went unanswered, but after the fourth the light of a lantern was seen waving and staggering above among the rocks.

"Who are you? Answer, or I will let fly a carronade at you!" It was Old George's voice, and it seemed that he had forgotten the appointment of the evening.

"Ready with the beer barrels there, if ever you want another drink, George Jex!" cried Long John. "Man the crane—we have but little time to lose."

"Easier said than done," grumbled Old George, "that brandy of yours was the very Beelzebub. There's not a man, except maybe Allister, that's fit to drive round the winch."

"Well, there's a fisher lad or two here, George, that would be glad of a groat," cried Long-bodied John, "shall I send them up to give ye a hand?"

"Never," answered George, valiantly, "not a foot does any new-gospelling herring-catcher set on the isle of the Bass. I'll work her mysel' first!"

"Verra weel, then," said John, "but ye will find nae boats. I dinna want the bottom driven oot o' my uncle's property by a beer cask coming at us in the dark like a thunderbolt frae the lift. Guid nicht to ye, George! The lads in the main-guard will sober aff by this time next month, and it will do them a world o' good to do without the tippeny ale till then, wi' a' that brandy in them to begin wi'!"

"No, no," cried Old George, with sudden anxiety, "they would brain me, and that's a fact. Send up your fishers, but see that they are decent lads."

So the two Simpsons, Grif Rysland and Raith Ellison were put ashore to do the deed, and they scrambled up the cliff swiftly, all of them knowing the way in the dark as readily as at noonday. Soon the walls of the little low fortifications stood up blocking their path, and they could hear George Jex bidding them to come in. But in his bemused state Old George had completely forgotten to unlock the outer gate, and now when summoned stood fumbling with the keys, unable to select the proper one.

"Open there, George," cried Grif, hoarsely, throwing his voice through a double fold of woollen muffler.

"Patience, burst ye!" shouted the angry man, "to hae a parcel o' scaly fishermen commanding me on the Bass. I'll gie ye 'open there,' wi' a pair o' pistols, ye helpless set o' tarry breeks!"

"Beer," suggested Grif, "beer and the casks to put it in!"

The gate swung as at an "Open Sesame," and George, who had been pushing with his shoulder to assist the action of the wards of the lock, fell forward into the arms of one of the Simpson lads.

Instantly Grif Rysland kicked his lantern down the slope, and fell to rating him for his carelessness.

"Drunken pigs," he exclaimed, still hoarsely, "and you, George, are the worst of the lot. To let fall your lantern, and no time to strike a spark in a tinder box. Get to the crane there, lads, and roll out the barrels. Lively, now!"

The guard-house was full of snoring forms, and it was evident that there was a cask of brandy in the corner at which it had been "cut-and-come-again."

Grif, who knew the position of the cell keys, had them down while the rest were still stumbling their way among the sleepers. Old George was groping in vain for the lantern, which Grif Rysland had already tumbled over the cliff.

"Now for the barrels," said Grif; "where do you keep them, George—the old place?" He ran along the row of cells, and opening each with a push of the foot or a nudge of the elbow, delivered his message and sped away. It was the long-planned rescue. The prisoners were to be ready. Not a word! Not a sound—only be ready!

A cradle of leather and iron had been slung with ropes to the pulley of the crane. Allister, whose part had already been assigned to him, had seen to it that all the heads were out of the casks.

"Send a light one down first," said Raith, "till we see how the winches work. Are you there, Allister, you and the others?"

At this moment Grif came out of the prison with a line of shadows at his back, which crouched under the darkness of the terrace wall.

"In with you first," he said as Gil Ellison stool uncertain whether or not to leave his father.

"He is in good hands!" whispered his guardian. "I will send him down next—if you are safe!"

Then aloud he cried "All ready below, John?"

"Ready—lower away!"

"George Jex," he said, "you are captain of the winch. Give the word. You command here!"

"Do I?" growled George. "I wish I had my lantern to see what I was commanding!"

"Better without it, considering our cargo," said Grif. "Well, if you won't, I will—lower away, lads!"

"All right below—lower away—slo-o-wly!" cried Old George, determined not to relinquish without a struggle the authority he had bought so dearly by twenty hours of comparative sobriety. Gil went down easily, the fishers and Allister on one side and the Simpson lads on the other, braking and letting go the handle-bar as was necessary.

"All right below?" cried George Jex, as the rattle of the winch stopped and the crane swung a little to the side.

"Right all—send us another, and look sharp!" came the voice of Long-bodied John from below.

Another cask was put on the empty cradle, the largest and best. It was William Ellison's turn, and there was a doubt whether or no he would submit without a protest. But Peden the Prophet was at his elbow.

"Go, William," he said, "I must get to the shore to die there. My soul cannot win loose here. Go first, it is the will of the Lord."

They guided him to the cask, George Jex growling at their landward awkwardness. Half-a-dozen of his fellows, if only they had been sober, could have cleared the lot in the time they had been lowering away one.

"I dare say," said Grif, still through his woollen screen, —"into the sea! But we manage to get them safe into a boat! Let her go!"

"Who is giving the word, you or I?" grunted George Jex. "Lower away, lads, and careful!"

And so by George's instructions, first blind old William Ellison and then Peden the Prophet were sent safely down into John Paton's boat. The other prisoners followed one by one.

Then it was time to take action of a more definite kind.

"Ahoy there, is Gregory's boat filled?" demanded Grif Rysland.

"Room for just one more!"

"One more then! And the last to top the cargo!"

It was the signal, sign and countersign. Grif Rysland, with a quick sweep of his arm, wound the woollen comforter round and round Old George's mouth, cramming the end well between his teeth. Raith set the cold rim of a pistol muzzle to his temple, and the Simpson lads bound him conscientiously hand and foot.

"You will go without a cask, George," said one of the last, "no empty kegs for you!" So they fastened him bodily to the cradle and swung him off into the darkness.

"Got him?" cried Grif as the paying out of the rope stopped without the usual jerk.

"Over-run!" the word came from below. "That one got a little dip in the sea. But no harm done. Haul away!"

"On board this time!" The shout came up. George had found rest.

"Let Gregory go on with his cargo," said Grif, "and bide you near the landing-place with the smaller boat. All clear below? Stand out from the cliff!"

"All clear!"

Grif cast off the hooks of the checking-chains, and tumbled the whole apparatus, ropes, cradle, hooks and all into the water.

"A little gunpowder," said Grif, "and we could have sent the crane by the board too."

"George!" cried a voice from the guard-room, in which they had supposed all the men to be lying snoring drunk, "George, what's all that? Show a glim, George!"

"Only the beer casks," growled Grif, imitating George Jex as well as he could, "and I've lost my lantern."

"Something wrong there, lads," cried the voice of Tyars, the Englishman, "tumble up there, fellows. That's never Old George's voice!"

"Let us alone," they growled from their various couches, "I tell you it is only the fishers for the empty beer casks!"

"Aye, that's what it is!" said Allister, from the terrace end.

"Something wrong," shouted Tyars, from his place; "ah, if I were not on my back—precious soon I would see. Wake up there, you drunkards! Wake up, ye crawling Scots, ye beggarly brandy-swillers. Get down the muskets from the racks. Fix bayonets. Strike a light!"

"One thing at a time, curse you, pock-pudding! 'What's the matter?' Nothing in the world—Old George loose among the beer, that's all."

"Strike a light, I tell ye," cried Tyars. "Give me the tinder. Lord you'll set us afire! There—now you've done it. We shall all roast for this—or at least I will, helpless here on my back."

One of the bemused drunkards, getting the tinder well alight, and blowing a shaving of dried wood into flame, accidentally dropped it into the brandy cask and instantly the pale blue flame of the spirit rose high. Some one knocked the keg over, perhaps thinking thus to extinguish it, and the flames flashed over the whole floor of the guard-room. Everything burst into instant flame. The drunkards staggered out trampling on one another, and shrieking with idiotic laughter. Not one of them thought of their wounded comrade on his couch, who alone had given the alarm. Even had they remembered, they would not have returned.

"Lads, give a hand," cried Tyars, "don't leave me to be roasted alive!"

But they stumbled and tripped on the steep slope, some of them even rolling down into the sea, which was the last of them. They slapped each other's burning coats where the spirits had been spilled, and all the time shouted with alternate laughter and oaths. Those who carried pistols or had guns in their hands fired them off as if rejoicing after a victory.

And all the time keen and dreadful rose the agonised screams of the burning man in the blazing guard-house.

"What to do—what to do?" said Raith, who was young and not yet ready in all emergencies.

"God in heaven—I had meant to kill him myself," cried Grif, suddenly, "but I can't stand this! If I don't come back, tell Euphrain that I did it for her sake!"

"Euphrain?" gasped Raith.

But Grif Rysland was already gone into that white belching house of flame, which roared about him like a furnace.

He emerged after what seemed hours but was only a few brief seconds, bearing a struggling man over his shoulder. Both were blackened and scorched almost beyond recognition.

"Oil and salve, there,"—Grif cried, "and oh, a mouthful of water!"

But no one of these was to be had. The guard had only given a little foul water each morning to the prisoners, and that had long since disappeared.

"I know!" said Raith, suddenly, "there are medicines in the governor's house—in the secret cupboard—if they have not found it out."

But it was impossible to pass through that flaming bursting brasier of the guard-house, now white-hot, and not to be looked at even from far without a hand held before the eyes.

"Over the wall at the corner of Peden's cell!" Raith explained to Allister, but the fisherman, though bred to the rocks, shrank back affrighted.

"It is hard enough in the daytime—impossible at night," he said, "I have never done it from the side of the prison."

"Well," said Raith, "I did—once—but I was running for my life!"

It was for another's life now, yet he did not hesitate. For that man was Grif Rysland. "I will fill the pitcher of water first," he said, "do you be ready to catch it when I swing, Allister. The rope is still there, I suppose."

Allister nodded, a little ashamed of having hung back. As he had promised, Raith was not long gone. He brought the water first safely enough, but as he ran for the governor's house up the hill, some of the scattered drunkards caught sight of him. His figure stood clear in the fierce white light from the burning guard-house.

"Lobster-back's ghost!" they cried, laughingly, too drunk to be afraid, as at another time they would have been, "let us have a shot apiece at Lobster-back's ghost." They were, however, far too tipsy to take aim. Raith found all things in the governor's house put to sack and pillage. But the little private cupboard had not been found. Raith could see everything clearly, for the fire made all within bright as day. The guards had smashed the small irregularly shaped lozenges of glass, whorled in their lead guards like the bottoms of bottles, and the glare from the crackling roof and flaming spirit came in undimmed.

He slid back the secret catch, a bar cunningly concealed above a wooden cornice. Opening the panel he speedily found what he wanted and sped back again untouched. One of the men got in his way, a musket in his hands, but Raith simply opened his mouth and ran roaring at him. At which the sot slipped and went headlong on the bird-sprinkled turf.

Raith got back safely enough, and the wounds of both Grif and the Englishman were dressed. For the moment, however, they could not be moved, though Grif, as he lay and groaned, could not but admit that the position was a serious one enough.

The fire in the guard-house would be a signal to all far and near that something serious had occurred upon the Bass. Doubtless there would be inquiries, offers of assistance, and so on, so soon as it was light on the following morning. Indeed, daybreak was now fast approaching. But certainly Grif could not be moved. Furthermore, they must either kill the Englishman or carry him with them, in order to keep his mouth shut. The white-hot ruins of the guard-house still glowed, shutting them in completely on that side. Raith and Allister might have made their way by the cliffs to the governor's house, but this was clearly impossible for the others.

"It is a pity," said Raith, "that the crane is destroyed."

"Pity," exclaimed Grif, tortured by the thought of the mistake he had made, as well as by the pain of his wounds. "It is a catastrophe! Grif Rysland, never set up for a wise man or a good soldier again. You have cut off your own retreat."

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

H. M. S. 'SWIFTSURE' IN THE BAY

DAY broke upon a close coverture of heat haze which filled the Firth. The rocky island lay as it were in the stream of a boiling pot. The unquiet pearl-grey sea-mist of the eastern coast went and came, thinning out above so that everything grew momentarily iridescent—anon, overcast and glooming as in the thickest tingle of a thunderstorm, just before the bolt breaks. Far below the fog would lift, as it were, a hand, and lo—they would see a single black skerry with the narrowest edging of white, small as if seen when one turns a spy-glass wrong-ways about.

This was very well for the moment, but no one knew when the fog would lift, or what they would see when it did lift. For the present they were all without food on the terrace of the Castle, and with Captain Grif in his present state it was impossible for them either to get away or to signal to Long-bodied John.

From the ousted garrison they had for the present no sort of trouble. The mist hid the two parties completely one from the other, and of itself brought about a kind of truce. All they could do was to succour the two wounded men, now lying amicably enough side by side on a little green space between the soldiers' lodging and the cells of the prisoners. Grif scorned himself openly for his bitter folly. As for the Englishman, he lay quite silent, not a flicker of pain on his face, though he was not only severely burned, but had also Raith's bullet still unextracted in his shoulder. He said no word, though he listened to everything, and occasionally smiled a strange smile.

Raith caught one of these, and took the meaning to be that Tyars was now sure of his revenge. At least it was plain that he was waiting for something to happen—something which he knew and expected, but of which his captors were ignorant.

It was about seven of the clock or nearer eight perhaps, that Raith Ellison, growing desperate as the morning went on, offered to chance it through the yet glowing embers of the guard-house and run down to the landing-place to see whether or no Long-bodied John were still there in waiting. It was an off-chance, but he was willing to risk that, or anything. He found that by throwing earth and rubbish on the glowing ashes and smouldering beams (for the roof had fallen in) some sort of a practicable path might be made over the *débris*. Still his boots were well-nigh burned off his feet before he got across, and it was manifestly impossible to carry two wounded men over such a place.

He had not gone far when he stumbled over a sleeping man, all tumbled in a heap as if he had been dead, yet lying (as a drunken man instinctively does) with his head to the hill. The man, whom he knew for one of the sourest and must ruffianly turnkeys, only grunted without rising, or indeed so much as opening his eyes.

Raith ran rapidly towards the landing-place. The black water-foot with its rude pier of native rock was already quite near, when all of a sudden he heard close at hand, as it seemed in his very ear, the thunder of a great gun.

Then as if at a given signal the sea-mist divided, swirling away in wreaths and coils, melting from before the sun, and lo—within a mile of the shore, plain and fair on the sunny blue water, a full-rigged King's ship was just coming to anchor. The snowy sails were drooping swiftly as the fog rose, and as Raith stood uncertain he heard the rattle and splash of the anchor chain into the deep still water.

Raith turned and ran back to the terrace walk with a tightness about his throat. They were caught in a trap indeed. Now, at last, he could interpret the meaning of the smile on the Englishman's face.

As he ran Raith could see that several of the drunkards were also on their feet, aroused by the near thunder of the ship's cannon. Some were merely yawning and shaking themselves listlessly. But he stopped for nothing. He had seen enough—more than enough to hang them all. There was no boat at the landing-place, and the King's ship was saluting the Castle and Prison of the Bass.

As he flew rather than picked his way over the still burning rubbish, he saw that they were holding up Grif Rysland to look.

"What ship is that?" he was asking hurriedly. "Is there no boat at the landing? We are prisoners!"

"I will tell you," said the Englishman, composedly, now speaking for the first time, "that is His Majesty's first-rate *Swiftsure*, Captain George Teddiman, from the Nore, doubtless sent to examine the state of the Castle and Prison of the Bass."

So saying he lay back with the air of a man who has played his part well. "Let me down!" said Grif Rysland.

The Englishman lay still a moment or two, and then with great force jerked himself up on his elbow.

"You have all your heads well in the noose," he said, looking round him, "but you, Captain Grif, saved my life at the risk of yours, when these drunken ruffians would have left me to roast alive. I am an Englishman. I hold no pact with a parcel of dirty Scotch thieves and turnkeys. I am a soldier like yourself, and though I have some lead in me which I owe to that young man there, I will stand by you, if so be that ye will accept of me."

There was nothing else to be done. They all listened to Tyars, the Englishman, who without doubt had been thinking hard as he lay silent.

"First, then," he said, "prime and fire that gun in the corner. It was made ready last night for the coming of the ship to-day. Old George saw to that. Bad as he is, he was the only half-man among that cowardly crew."

And from his bed he directed the firing of the saluting gun, which Raith reprimed and touched off a moment after.

"There now," said Tyars, "that is about all I can do for you. The rest you must manage for yourselves. That will give you an hour or two's grace. They never come ashore for inspection early on a King's ship. And even then, most likely it will only be a boat's crew with a boy officer. That is, unless they have some suspicion. If I were in your shoes, I would herd up these rascals outside—and get them in here with as little shooting as may be."

Grif also had been thinking. Raith could see him turning impatiently from side to side.

"Thank you, Tyars," he said, "I always thought you a man. If I could only go out and help. But you lads must do the best you can and leave Tyars and me to guard the Castle."

Six they were who went to disarm and bring back the entire drunken garrison. Raith was in command. With him were Allister and his two cousins, the fisher lads of the Bass, while the two young Simpsons, James and Archie, brought up the rear. Raith left them to keep the entrance, though indeed it was little likely that they would venture of their own accord through the fuming masses of rubbish which had once been their guard-house.

The first part was easy enough. Raith found the sluggards just where he had passed them on his way to the landing-place. Most of them had simply rolled over to finish their sleep. Others were sitting holding their temples. One man was moaning. "My head—oh, my head! Never, oh, never more!"

These Raith and the three followers thumped with their gun-butts and poked with their bayonets till they had them on the march.

"You are prisoners," they informed them, "you understand? March! If you do not want your heads blown off!"

And they did so, only the man who had been holding his temples, wailing that on the whole he thought his would be easier so. But a few others, more awake, and seeing the fate of their comrades beneath, were on the alert, and escaped up the hill—slowly, it is true, and making no choice of hiding-places, like men with only half their wits about them.

The chance word which he had spoken to them when he ordered them towards the ruins of the guard-house, was, in its way, a revelation to Raith. Yes, that was what to do with them. When he had coaxed and coerced his staggering convoy over the embers, he called out at once, "Captain, where are the keys?"

"What keys?" said Grif, surprised at the young man's unusual tone of authority, for responsibility is a wonderful tonic.

"The keys with which you opened the cells last night?"

"I threw them down by the last cell—Peden's I think!" said the ex-governor. Raith ran and found them as his chief had said. Then systematically he began to lock in his captives two in a cell, while Grif and the Englishman looked on with approval. Raith laid the keys beside Grif Rysland in the shadow, and marshalled his forces for another attempt.

"Remember there ought to be five more," said Tyars, "Pierce, Colvin, Conroy, MacBean, and the Keely! Put a stopping shot in the Keely, and the rest will come like lambs."

Raith had a more difficult business before him now, and it struck him suddenly that, as the five whom Tyars had named would assuredly be in ambush, waiting for him, it would be well for his forces to divide. He proposed therefore that he should go out himself by the difficult and dangerous passage on the cliff side of Peden the Prophet's dungeon. To his surprise, Archie Simpson, his younger cousin, offered to accompany him, though as before the fishermen hung back. What is more, Archie made his offer good, and by means of the rope and ring fastened in the wall, Raith and his volunteer found themselves on the margin of the cliff towards its northern side, and not far from where he had formerly been driven into a trap at the point of Hughie's Rock.

But this time he was laying the snare himself, and it was quite unseen that he and the younger Simpson stretched away, keeping under lee of the rocks on all fours, till they were assured of having turned the position of the enemy. Then crossing behind the conical summit of the Bass they cautiously descended the southern side, sure of taking the enemies' position in the rear. Presently, they heard beneath them the crackle of an irregular volley, and looking from behind a rock they saw the blue smoke of gunpowder lazily drifting from behind a little breast-high ridge which commanded the entrance to the Castle. Allister, his two comrades and the elder Simpson could be seen carefully picking their way across the smouldering *débris* of the guard-house.

From behind the rock another gun spoke. Then making a sudden dash Allister and his three advanced rapidly till they also got into shelter.

"There must not be much more of this noise," said Raith, in a low voice, "or we shall have the King's ship sending off a boat's crew to find out what is the matter."

"Better finish, then!" said Raith's cousin Archie, a lad of an excellent courage.

Raith nodded and they glided down with the utmost circumspection till they found themselves with their guns cocked, looking over the rear of their enemies' position, within a yard or two of their unconscious backs, as they peered and watched for the chance of a shot at those in front.

"Do not move, at your peril," said Raith. "We have you covered! Throw your guns as far as you can over the rocks in front, and then turn about."

But the Glasgow Keely was quick. He had turned at the first word, and discharged his piece point blank at Raith. The young man's bonnet flew off and for a moment it seemed as if all would follow the Glasgow man's example. But Raith sprang over and knocked the Keely senseless with a blow from the butt of his gun, while from beneath Allister and the others came swarming. So taken between two fires, what remained of the mutineers (or of the faithful garrison, according to the point of view) was fain to yield up its arms and follow meekly in the company of their captors. Two of them carried the unconscious Keely, who alone that day had showed himself worthy of his city and upbringing.

In this order they entered the Castle and were duly locked up in the remaining empty cells.

"Now," said the Englishman to Grif Rysland, "I do not know how far you are ready to go, or what pressure you are willing to put on this rascaldom. But so far as I can see, it is your heads or theirs. Take their uniforms and get into them as fast as may be. There is still a suit of the governor's in the garret up at the house. Ellison's scarlet, also though a little touched with sea-water, is still presentable. I saw one of the turnkeys with it the other day. You will make a small appearance, of course, with two wounded men, and one of these the governor. But half your force can be on shore for provisions—these sailor-men will know no better."

Grif listened grimly, nodding approval as Tyars proceeded from point to point.

"You mean, it is a question of making these fellows hold their tongues?" he said.

"Exactly!" assented the Englishman, shortly.

"Then I charge myself with that!" said Grif. "Lads, go fetch my uniform. Tyars will direct you. Meanwhile give me an arm on either side, good lads. I will talk to these brutes! Thank Heaven, Raith Ellison, that your—I mean, that there are no women on the Bass to hear me!"

Grif Rysland hobbled to the cells and held a short colloquy with the inmates, of which the matter was somewhat as follows: "You know me, ye gutter scum—I am Grif of the Dragoons. By appointment, I am King's Governor of this Island. When summoned to Edinburgh, I left Raith Ellison, of my regiment, to be Deputy in my place. Ye rose in mutiny and would have murdered him like the villains ye are. Now, listen to me, the rope is about your necks. There is a King's ship in the bay. An examining officer will come on up to the Castle in a little. If ye let him know by word or look that ye are not the ordinary conventicle prisoners, whom ye have let escape in your drunken folly, I will shoot you on the spot for mutiny. This I promise by my oath. Ye know whether I keep that or no!"

If the Keely had been in a state to speak his mind, or if Tyars had continued on their side, even Grif Rysland might have found a difficulty in shutting the mouths of so many men. But in a little while, they even began to enter into the spirit of the jest, as they thought it, though it was such grim earnest for the captors of the Bass. Bundles of Whiggamore clothes, broad blue bonnets, checked Westland plaids, and Galloway brogans were searched out, and under the care of the two Simpson lads, who were boyishly delighted with their task, the dour, sodden, evil-eyed hacks of the gaol and the town-guard, were washed and combed and set soberly down in the more dusky corners of their cells. Some of them even started a psalm, but Grif's rasping "None of that!" came in such a tone of anger that the mockery was stopped at once.

Meantime a keen watch was kept upon the King's ship beneath, the routine of which they could see quite plainly. She was that same battle ship, *Swiftsure*, which had escaped from the Dutch many years before, in the time of the Shame. Presently, with many groans Grif had been endued with his uniform coat, while Raith in his faded scarlet and the elder Simpson in the clothes of one of the captives marched most gallantly up and down, the flash of their bayonets being clearly observable from the ship's deck, a moving proof of the good watch and ward which was kept on His Majesty's Castle and Prison of the Bass.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

CAPTAIN GEORGE TEDDIMAN'S INSPECTION OF THE BASS

It was, as the Englishman Tyars had foretold, after dinner (that is, the *Swiftsure's* dinner, for those on the Bass had none) before a boat was seen to put off from the ship, with an officer, gallant in gold braid and lace, seated in the stern sheets.

The Castle of the Bass ran up a flag in honour of the visit and fired a gun. But within, every man had a quaking heart.

"Take me once more along the line of cells," said Grif to the Simpsons. And he gathered his black brows into a knot before he began his course.

"Lads," he said, to the prisoners, "I will tell you one thing. I was sent here to command the Bass to be out of the way—*because I killed a man*—the Laird of Houston, you may have heard of him. It was a little thing and I have never boasted of it. But, believe me, if any one of you disobeys me in jot or tittle this day of all days, I will make him, on the spot, no better than the Laird of Houston. So keep that in your minds, good lads!"

Raith, thinking hard, was down at the landing-place with Allister and one of his fisher relatives. The boat seemed to approach with stupefying slowness. In spite of the eight stout sailor men, each with a clubbed pig-tail down his back, it seemed to stand still in the water. For Raith was in a hurry to have it over, that he might know his fate and that of the others up in the Castle.

"What—no jetty . . . . call that a landing-place? Where in the name of . . . . (certain sea divinities) . . . . am I to bring up my boat?"

It was a stout middle-aged officer in a cocked hat, with much gold lace upon it, who spoke. There was a younger officer beside him nursing a sword across his knees, but though the crew carried short cutlasses, which rather impeded them in rowing, they were only ordinary man-o'-war's men and Raith fixed all his attention upon the elder officer.

"No stage for landing can be made here, Captain," he said, courteously, "the storms would sweep it away, and besides, it is accounted part of the defences of the Isle."

"So it is—so it might well be, if the enemy were all over fifty-five and well grown about the girths! Hey, lads, ship your oars, half of you, and give me a boost. The other half stand ready to fend off! Don't scrape Lieutenant Grime's paint or you will hear of the matter. I can't save you!"

It was, as Raith had divined, no other than Captain George Teddiman of the *Swiftsure* who stood, plethoric and panting, on the black rocks, between Allister and the fisher lad.

"Arms pulled out of my sockets—oh—always do that here? Custom of the place, too? What—this is a smooth day, is it? And who are you? Why, your uniform looks as if it had been keelhauled. The best you have got, Ellison of the Dragoons—Colonel Grahame's! Ah, I have heard of him—owns all Scotland, the Duke says—I mean the King, God bless him! But it shall never be said that George Teddiman judged any man by the fit of his clothes. His own, Lord knows—if it were not for ship's discipline and Reggie here—well, the less said about that the better!"

He glanced up at the steep track to the Castle.

"Where's the swinging crane I heard so much about at the Trinity?" he exclaimed; "told me you could heave a man up as easily as a pound of saltpetre. I don't see it."

"It went over the rock into the sea during the last storm, sir!" said Raith.

"Ah," cried the Captain, turning about, "come out, then, four of you, and the others put out a bit to keep the paint safe. A captain of a first-rater must not go up to a King's Castle as if he were a snatch-purse on the highway. But what are dragoons doing here? In that service you all set up for gentlemen, I hear—even the privates!"

To this Raith answered nothing, a glance from the young officer who had been called Reggie warning him to be silent.

"And why should you not?" cried the Captain of the *Swiftsure*, stopping to get his breath, "God knows I'm the last man to question gentility in any man who behaves himself! But dragoons on an island—where d'ye keep your horses? Something wrong there surely—something to note down, something to remark upon in my report?"

At this Raith grew somewhat frightened. This man, for all his peaceful aspect and questionings, might prove more troublesome than one more imperious. He hastened to explain.

"I am of His Majesty's Dragoons," he said, "or rather perhaps I ought to say, I was. I came hither with my superior officer, who requested that I should be allowed to accompany him. He is governor of the island."

"His name?"

"Captain Grif Rysland!"

"Grif Rysland, ah!" said the visitor.

The Captain of the *Swiftsure* stopped on the slope which he had begun to climb, half because he was glad of a chance to stop and breathe, and half because something in the name struck him.

"Gad's fish," he cried, "why, I've heard of him before, only the other day—where was it, Reggie? No—you can't remember. You are of no use except to see if my boots are greased, and even these you are too civet-scented to do yourself. Strange—I remember that name——"

He removed his huge cocked hat from his head and mopped his great red well-looking face. Raith thought that this was an auspicious moment for a confidence, which might in some degree prepare Captain Teddiman's mind for what was awaiting him above.

"It is a long story, sir," he said, "we have had trouble here with the prisoners, who managed yesterday to set fire to the guard-house. You may have heard some shooting. We were getting back those who had escaped."

"Bless the lad," cried the Captain, stamping, "do not trouble me about your dirty psalm-singers. I am on the track of a gentleman. I tell you I have heard of this Captain Grif Rysland before—where was it? How was it? What sort of a man is he?"

"About fifty, sir—a splendid soldier, sent here for killing a man who spoke slightingly of his daughter!" said Raith, before whose eyes the vision of Ivie rose, for the moment almost depriving him of speech.

"Eh, ah," grunted Captain George Teddiman, "yes—by Jove, I have it—a fighter and a brave man—put his sword through my cousin the Laird of Houston—unconscionable swilling rascal. Glad shall I be to shake him by the hand! I have heard of him, a brave, a very brave fellow. I shall tell him that it would be doing me a great favour if he would only do just as much for Houston's four brothers. Then I, George Teddiman, stand next in the Houston succession, and a snug anchorage it would be for an old salt with a great deal of gout and a very small pension."

So he went his way, leaning on the arm of the young officer, and it was not till he was more than half way up that he called Raith once more to his assistance.

"The daughter—the pretty daughter," he demanded, "is she with her father up there?"

"No," said Raith, carefully, "I believe she is at present on the mainland with friends."

"Ah, a pity that, a manifest pity," Captain Teddiman grunted. "I believe, Reggie, that we will not have a long time to remain. The ship is on a lee shore, sir. I do not like the anchorage. I must hasten, sir. But the girl—where has she gone?"

"That I do not know," said Raith, truthfully, "she had an accident on the Bass—was blown by a whirlwind from that rock yonder, and since that she has not, I believe, wished to return."

The Captain looked about him and shook his head.

"I do not wonder," he said, "I am of the young lady's faction. The deck of a ship, now—that is level, and one does not get blown off it. She would be better there. To tell the truth, there is a sly old fox in our Navy Office, one Mr. Samuel Pepys, he told me there never was such a girl for beauty as this mistress—what is her name?—thank you, Ivie Rysland!"

And so prattling on, Captain George Teddiman reached the heap of smoking ruins which was all that remained of the guard-room. Here he stood eyeing the confusion with uplifted hands.

"What have we here?" he cried; "battle, murder, and sudden death? Where's Captain Rysland? Where is the governor?"

During Raith's absence the Simpson lads and the remaining fishermen had covered the most traversable portion of the ruins with turf, on which they had laid boards.

"The governor was hurt last night saving a wounded man out of the burning guard-house, sir," said Raith; "he is waiting for you at the other side."

"Go on in front," cried Captain George Teddiman. "Hang me if I have scrambled up a place like this since I was a middy, and mastheaded for smoking tobacco."

Governor Grif seated on a chair was awaiting his visitor. He kept the upright position with considerable pain, but his bandaged hands and the difficulty he had in rising spoke for him. Another chair had been placed close alongside. Raith took in the new aspect of the Castle of the Bass at a glance. Save for the ruins of the fire which they had passed, and the haze of wood smoke in which the entire island was enveloped, all might have been as it was of old. The sentinel paced sedately and regularly up and down.

The two Simpsons mounted guard at either end. A face peered here and there from the prisoners' cells. On the strip of green grass between the soldiers' lodging and the prison, a mattress had been placed for Tyars. He held the key of the situation, and if he were false to his promise, they might expect to be hung man by man from the yard-arm of the *Swiftsure.*

The young officer spoken of as Reggie had turned at the entrance, upon seeing the small extent of the prison-yard.

"Stay where you are," he had said; "cutlasses out! Carry!"

It was only intended as a little bit of naval show, but to Raith glancing back, it had the aspect of a thundercloud. Not that he and his comrades could not account for these, but behind them were there not hundreds and hundreds of others, backed by all the great guns of a ship-of-the-line, ready to batter down the defences of the Bass stone by stone!

But when he looked again Captain George Teddiman had taken his place peaceably beside Grif Rysland. The naval officer had observed the stiff descent of the governor into his chair, and, being a kindly man, he suggested that a mattress in the shade would be more comfortable.

So one was brought and on it Grif reclined, after begging the Captain's pardon for being forced to receive him in such a fashion.

"George Teddiman, sir," was the answer, "George Teddiman has seen too many wounded men not to know how one ought to treat himself—so that he may the sooner be fit again for the service of the King—God bless him!"

And off went the great cocked hat a second time.

As was the custom in these early days of the discipline in a standing army, the sentry presented arms each time he passed and repassed the spot where the Captain of the *Swiftsure* conferred with Grif Rysland. The monotony of the performance irritated the seaman.

"Tell that whirling mountebank to confine himself to marching up and down," he said sharply. Grif, a little shocked, gave the order.

"It is our military custom," he said, "in a little while you would no more notice it than I!"

"Very likely," said Captain Teddiman; "I know you for a good soldier, sir, and I am acquainted with the circumstances which have brought you here!"

"The devil you are!" said Grif Rysland, under his breath. He was intensely surprised, and could not for the life of him imagine what the captain of the man-of-war would say next.

"I mean," he went on, "the duel you fought with the Laird of Houston!"

Once more Grif Rysland breathed freely.

"Ah," he said, for something to say, "Captain Teddiman is well informed."

"No offence—no offence, sir, I trust," said the Captain. "I am an old seaman, but I have held a pistol or two on the sands in a quiet corner. I never could learn to be clever with the long hangers you use on shore. But they tell me it was a clean thrust right through his vitals that did Houston's business. He was my first cousin, sir!"

Startled in spite of himself, Grif Rysland looked at his neighbour with angry eyes. After all, was he not playing with him as a cat with a mouse? But the round red simplicity of the weather-beaten countenance reassured him.

"Your cousin, Captain Teddiman," he stammered, "I am sorry—I had not the least idea!"

The Captain waved his hand largely and tolerantly.

"No offence," he cried, "on the contrary, quite on the contrary, I do assure you. Lord, sir, if only you could have managed to put your weapon through the other four brothers—what a service you would have done me! I suppose," he added with a trifle of sadness, "you had no cause of quarrel with them?"

"No," mused Grif, "one of them was, I know, present on the occasion. He acted as my second or as his brother's—I forget which."

The sea captain, amazed at his carelessness, turned sharply upon the soldier.

"Do you mean to tell me," he cried, "that you went into action without seconds of your own, in the company of Houston and his brothers—that you took one of them for your second?"

"Really I did not notice—it might have been another man," said Grif, "I was in no danger. They were all militia officers—I of Colonel Grahame's dragoons. Besides, my name was well known in these parts. It was an affair of a very few minutes!"

"The matter, I am informed," began again the Captain of the *Swiftsure*, "a duel on account of——"

"I think there is no reason for going into that now," interrupted Grif Rysland, a little stiffly, looking straight at

Captain Teddiman; "whoever told you so much was likely to be well informed on that point also, and I must inform you that I gave the rascal three chances for his life."

"Too many by three, sir," replied the ship's captain; "you should have spitted him at the first pass, and then taken his brothers one by one. I am next in the succession, as I was telling that nephew of yours down below. If ever you should come across the Houstons and they had any desire to carry on the quarrel, you will not forget to do a good turn to an old sea-dog in search of a snug harbour—and—if I may say so, of a good wife—yes, a good wife—not too old!"

The emphasis with which he spoke these last words, and the knowing wink with which he accompanied them so astonished Grif, that he drew himself a little up on his couch with a grimace of involuntary pain.

Captain Teddiman motioned to his young officer. "Reggie," he said, "go and talk with the young man who met us at the landing-place down there. I have something to say to the Governor in private."

He waited till "Reggie" had gone off with an exceeding ill grace, and then leaning towards Grif, he instantly began demonstrating with his finger vividly.

"The circumstances are like this," he said; "I must tell you, and yet I feel that I am taking a certain advantage of a man on the breadth of his back. 'Tis not like George Teddiman so to do, but then the chance has come upon me unexpected, and, in fact, a man was talking to me about it just as we left the Navy Yard."

Grif Rysland's head whirled. He wondered if indeed his ears were hearing aright. He began to think that either he must be dreaming or that he had an affair with a madman.

"Faith," continued the old sailor, "what I said about the Houstons was in jest—or half jest and half earnest, like Yorkshire pudding. But this is wholly earnest, like English roast beef and a mug of Rochester beer. You have a daughter, Captain Rysland?"

"I have," assented Grif, with a grim firming of the mouth.

"Well then," said the Captain of the *Swiftsure*, "I am a plain man of mature years—no jackanapes like that Jack Houston, or any Houston of the lot of them. You won't spit George Teddiman for what he is going to say. I am neither a rich man nor a poor man. I am captain of a first-rate, and—well, they may need me by and by! Now if your daughter be open to an honest man's offer of marriage, I tell you, sir, I make it here and now!"

"But," cried Grif in great astonishment, "you have never so much as seen my daughter!"

"No, I have not," said the Captain of H.M.S. *Swiftsure*, "but what of that in the navy? I know one who has—aye, and a man whom I can trust better than myself when it is a matter of petticoats—a man of much experience and infinite judgment among womenkind, sir—Mr. Secretary Pepys of the Navy Board."

"And what, in the name of the Seven Devils, knows Mr. Pepys of the Navy Board of my daughter?" Grif demanded, restraining himself with some considerable difficulty.

"Why, our Mr. Pepys, sir," the seaman went on, "is a great man, sir—most learned, and has a stone in his bladder about which he reads papers to all the greatest surgeons at the Royal Society. Also he is Secretary of the Admiralty. and indeed has new-made the service, fleet, office, Trinity and all—a very great man, sir!"

"But what has this great Mr. Pepys to do with my daughter?" demanded Grif, who was now sure that the man before him had a crack in his brain-case.

"Truth then, I tell you," said Captain Teddiman. "Mr. Pepys saw Mistress Ivie more than once when he was in Scotland with my Lord Duke of York—now most fortunately His Majesty the King—God bless him!" (Here was another flourish of the laced hat!) "He went down to the south to pay his respects to Colonel Grahame and my Lord Nithsdale, and doubtless there was much talk about the beauty of your honourable daughter, sir. And if you will pardon an honest seaman—also concerning the length of your sword! And Mr. Pepys told me that there was talk too, and that if she would only go to Court she would surely make her fortune. But Mr. Pepys, who is a sober man and demure, though of so great experience, ever asserted and maintained that the maid was the sweetest and honestest maid that ever was, and would make a man the best wife. Nay, Mr. Pepys even went so far as to say, that but for the fact that he rested under a vow to remain ever faithful to the memory of his sainted wife Elizabeth, he would have married her himself!"

"I am infinitely obliged to Mr. Pepys!" quoth Grif, dryly.

"Nay, but it would have been an honour, sir—to any man—he so high in favour with the King and all—an honour for any man, a man of such excellent judgment, and experienced. Faith of Saint Charles the Blessed Martyr, but if I had fifty daughters Mr. Pepys might have them every one, an he would, sir!"

"But," said Grif, who now began to observe from a distance the impatience of the younger naval officer, and saw that it would not be at all a bad thing to keep Captain George Teddiman in play as long as possible, "you have not come to your own part in the matter. Surely as a prudent man you would never propose to wed a girl on the recommendation of another?"

"Aye, that would I, sure-ly!" said Captain Teddiman, "that is, if the man were Mr. Samuel Pepys of the Navy Office. Why, sir, his judgment of a ship alone is worth that of all the admirals of the fleet. See him just cock his head to the side, and, Lord, he can tell their gait to half-a-knot an hour! And with women, sir, the very same! A woman is like a ship, says he. Both take a lot of knowing, only it can't be learnt. But some men have the gift—some not! It is genius, plain genius—that's what it is. They take one look at a woman, and can see her, truck to keels, stem to stern, all she has done, and all that she is going to do, the jilts and the posies alike, jiggling jills and soberly housemaidens. For myself I can no more tell them, than I can take hold o' the moon and cut myself a slice o' cheese. There was a little piece at Portsmouth—ah, but that tale will keep, eh, Captain? Now, Mr. Pepys, sir, would never have made such a mistake. He sees more in 'em than a poor old sailor like me. And if your daughter will have me, why, George Teddiman is ready, and there's Teddiman Thorpe, not a great place like Houston, but a tidy little manor for all that, in the county of Chester, within sight of the Welsh hills—very much at her service and yours, Captain Rysland, on the plighted faith of an honest man and a friend of Mr. Secretary Pepys's!"

It is to be judged that Grif Rysland felt the complexity of his position at that moment, but he only reached out his hand to the Captain and said, "Sir, you are a good man, and doubtless in excellent favour with the government. So I will not hide from you that I am, for the present at least, in some considerable disgrace, and perhaps likely to be in more——"

"Tut, tut," cried the sailor, heartily, "that matter of cousin Houston—it will blow over—never fear, lad. And then, what say you?"

"Captain Teddiman," said Grif Rysland, "an honest man always deserves an honest answer. I am a soldier of fortune, sir. I cannot tell where fate may lead me or for whom my sword may fight, but I shall ever remember with pleasure your words——"

"And you will convey my request to Mistress Ivie?"

"That I will do, Captain!"

"Bid her think it over, she might do worse, sir—a good old fellow, not ill-looking nor yet unserviceable—better than a score of young rakes, for ever gadding about, that I'll swear! The older they are, the more tender, like game hung up in the larder, sir! That's what Mr. Pepys says about lovers, sir, and a good judgment, to my mind. Then she has her husband under her hand, not for ever pestering her, but on deck when she calls for him, or wants a golden groat to buy the child a gown, as the saying is. And, by the way, please to mention that Teddiman Thorpe is a jaunty little manor, and if she will only say 'yes' to an old fellow that is ready to love her all his life on the recommend of Mr. Pepys of the Navy Board, she will never regret it, sir, and I would build her a parlour to the south from which she could see the fairies dancing on Moel Berwyn a-nights all the summer through!"

By this time the fidgets of the young officer, who had been called Reggie, had become quite insupportable. Flags were fluttering from the *Swiftsure* which were evidently meant to have a meaning for him. He came up and saluted his superior officer.

"I beg your pardon, Captain Teddiman," he said, "but there is a storm rising and they are getting anxious about you on the ship. There is, you will remember, but a poor landing-place here, and the coast behind is dangerous, reefs and half-covered rocks as far as one can see!"

Captain Teddiman rose with a jerk.

"Indeed, I must be going," he said—"can I serve you in anything—a boat-load of provisions, anything of the sort? Delighted! And my report? Let me see, doubtless you will make your own about the fire. So I need not mention that. But the prisoners, now—I suppose I had better take a look at them, just to be able to say they were all safe."

"Step this way, sir," said Grif Rysland in a loud voice, who knew that the critical moment had now come. "Your arm, Raith—my pistols!"

And so quite slowly they made their way along the front of the cells.

"My wig, what an unholy set of ruffians!" exclaimed Captain Teddiman, "why, I had always thought your Covenanters were a poor feeble folk, somewhat hardly treated, like our Foxites. But these lowering rascals look as if they had all the sins in the decalogue to their credit."

"Most of them have," said Grif briefly.

"Ah, here we are—at the end," Captain Teddiman breathed a sigh of relief; "give me your hand, Reggie. No, do not accompany me. I will not permit it—get to the sick bay, sir, and stay there. Your young man, Ellison, will do. That is his name—I shall not forget it. Fall in there, men. And, Captain Grif, do not forget my message to Mistress Ivie. I swore to Mr. Pepys that I would do it some day, if ever I met you or the lady. And I would not dare to face him at the Admiralty if I had not! A singular man—a man of insight, sir, women and ships, sir—women and ships—much the same—only a genius can tell 'em apart! Lord, I was never any judge—never set up to be!"

And so saying and occasionally stopping to pant and wave his hand on the steep slope, Captain George Teddiman completed to his own satisfaction the visitation and inspection of the Bass.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

GOOD-BYE TO THE BASS

THE promised two boat-loads of provisions were duly delivered, together with the Captain's compliments to the Governor, a recommendation not to forget his promise, together with the added information that the arable area of Teddiman Thorpe was over four thousand acres, and the mansion house commodious, though sadly in need of repair, which the owner would see about at once.

The Governor by the mouth of Raith reciprocated the good wishes of Captain Teddiman, and requested him to give himself no uneasiness about the fulfilment of his promise. The Governor of the Bass further wished Captain Teddiman a most prosperous voyage, and so these unusual courtesies between two high contracting parties came to an end.

The *Swiftsure* sailed in an hour, standing fairly out to sea, to the infinite relief of the present inhabitants of the Bass, at least of as many of them as were able to enjoy the spectacle.

After the last flutter of white had passed away to the northward, the prisoners, that is to say, the sometime garrison, were requested to turn to and carry up the provisions from the landing-place to the store-houses near the governor's house. Raith and the two Simpson lads stood over them with loaded muskets as they worked. Only the Keely was left at home, still suffering from the broken head he had received from Raith's brass-shod butt.

A council of war was called by Grif Rysland as soon as the gift of Captain Teddiman had been safely bestowed. It was obvious that the sooner they rid the Bass of their presence, the better. But, on the other hand, they had undertaken certain responsibilities. They could not leave the garrison locked up in the cells, perhaps to perish of hunger. Yet they must have such a start as would prevent immediate pursuit. Furthermore, there was Tyars the Englishman to be thought of, who had rendered them such signal service.

Grif interrogated his followers one by one as to their wishes. The Simpsons seemed to have no scruples or exigencies. They could, as they put it, "fend for themselves." They would, they thought, if no better might be, cast in their lot for a while with Allister and his mates, who on that wild shore led semi-lawless lives, with plenty to do and plenty to get. As for Raith, he would go where Grif went. It rested with the latter therefore to say what was to be the next move and when it was to be taken.

The ex-governor of the Bass managed to hobble to where Tyars the Englishman lay still on his hard couch with a tankard of good English beer at his elbow.

"I thank you," said Grif Rysland, "I thank you for your silence as much as for your advice."

The Englishman smiled.

"I chose the best of two bads," he said: "I took your side, because you had saved me out of that fiery furnace there, when these drunken pigs left me to perish without a thought. Further than that I do not mix myself with your projects!"

"But," cried Grif, "we are evacuating the Island and could not leave you alone with the rascals of the garrison, if you thought they would attack you."

"Attack me—pshaw," said Tyars, "why, I could fight a dozen like them, even on my back. But they know nothing. Listen: I have been wounded and helpless in your hands—so have they. Well, do you leave me here on the Bass, with the provisions, all the guns and ammunition you can spare, and I will undertake to hold the men of the garrison three days, without a word said, or a message sent. After that, I will fright them into flying for their lives, by the tale of how they themselves let down the prisoners with the flying crane, the night they were so drunk. They will never know the difference. At any rate the cells are empty, and they, or some of them, are manifestly responsible. Do not trouble. They will put as much ground as possible between themselves and the Bass, when they come to think over what I shall say to them. They are cowards all, except the Keely, and he has had enough of the Bass to serve him for one while. His head rings like a hive of bees!"

"And for you, yourself, Tyars?" demanded Grif, "what will you do?"

"Oh, for me, I stand by the rock," said the Englishman, smiling. "What have I done? One rebel fires a ball into me. There it is in my shoulder to prove it. Some other fools and drunkards set the guard-house on fire while I lie wounded and nearly roast me alive. I have still more to show for that. Never fear, Maurice Tyars will have his tale pat long before any reinforcements arrive. Long-bodied John will bring me what I need, and lend me a hundredweight of rock at my feet if I die. And who knows, when all get their own, I may be raised to honour because of all this! Go your ways, gentlemen. You are a good soldier, Captain Grif, and I wish you well—you too, Raith Ellison. But there is beer in the storeroom which will take a long time to drink, and being a simple man, I think I will go on standing by my duty."

And so he did, till the king stood no longer for himself, but tripped it to St. Germain, and Maurice Tyars was still on the Bass, when, a second time, the prisoners broke out and overcame the garrison, which, though a great tale, indeed, comes not into this.

Things being so, there was nothing for it but to wait for night and the advent of Long-bodied John. But twilight came and presently night, yet with them no Long-bodied one, his boat nosing comfortably against the black rocks, controlled by a single sweep of his hand or an oar over the stern.

Whereupon Allister, who most ardently desired to be gone, volunteered to cross in one of the skiffs which were kept on the rock, in order to find out what had become of the faithful messenger of Prayerful Peter. He started before ten o'clock, and it was close on one when there came a cry from below. During the interval they had seen Tyars safely installed in the storehouse, where were all the ammunition, all the spirits, all the food. He had chosen from among the turnkeys one in whom he thought he could place some little confidence.

"At least," he said, "I can fright the life out of him! Of that I am certain."

And with the keys, all the loaded muskets and pistols at his elbow, and the only cunning brain on the island, it seemed a likely thing that Tyars would be able to carry through his programme. In the meantime his chosen, Colvin, a soft rag of a man, a head-hanger by nature, promised most faithfully to pass the prisoners' food and drink to and fro to them till the moment came for setting them free.

Now it was time to say goodbye, and that part was perhaps more curious than all the rest.

"Captain," said Tyars, "I owe my life to you, and being a common man, perhaps I ought to say nothing."

"Say on," said Captain Grif, "we all owe our lives to you ten times over."

"Well, as a man, Captain," said Tyars, "I should be proud to serve under you by sea or land, but as a Governor of this island and prison, I think you have failed of your duty!"

"Ah, you think so, do you?" said Grif, calmly; "well, I think differently and I know most about it. I have no time to explain, even were an explanation due. But if ever you and I meet, safe and well—I shall be proud to explain my conduct—either with pistol or with sword!"

"The sabre is my favourite weapon!" suggested Tyars, calmly.

"Very well then, I have no objections to the sabre," quoth Grif Rysland. "Goodnight to you."

"Goodnight and good luck—till our next——"

"Explanation!" interjected Captain Grif, and was gone, leaning heavily on the arms of Raith Ellison and the younger Simpson.

Down at the landing-place they found only Allister with his two comrades, both standing about him, looking very stricken and disconsolate.

"I cannot see any sign of Long-bodied John," he said, "nor yet of his boat. So I had to run over to the Berwick shore and borrow Allan Donald's. She is not so very roomy, but it is a clear night, and she will hold us all neatly."

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

THE LETTER ON THE ROSE-BUSH

In the grey of the morning, before the rose flush to which, in the daft days when (as it seemed) nothing ever happened, Raith had compared Ivie's lips, the boat drew into Cantie Bay. There, glimmering curiously close, was the white house, very still, and the shore along which, from the dullness of the cave, Raith had so often watched her walk. His mother would be there, and Euphrain—his father too, perhaps——?

A momentary flush of fear came over the lad as he wondered whether even now he would be forgiven. He knew that there was no greater yearning in his heart towards the grimness of his father's faith. In that instinctive dislike he remained as he had been, a Gallio, caring for none of these things. But one thing he had learned in his troubles, that a man may not forsake his own folk, of whose blood he is, and the kindliness in which he has been reared.

The boat came alongside the little pier, but there was no sign of Long-bodied John or of his boat. Prayerful Peter did not come sidling from the nearest shelter and spy-hole to explain things. Everywhere there was an uneasy silence, which oppressed even the sailor lads.

"Stay at the boat," said Allister to one of his comrades, silent youths, to whom long residence on the Bass among mocking and ribald turnkeys had made silence a habit. "I will run up to the cave!"

But Raith was before him, and Grif, but for his hurt, would have set out also. Raith Ellison ran along the little strip of beach, his feet slipping among the leathery starfishes stranded by last month's high tides. He sprang over Peter's fence of tarred boards, ducked his head under Euphrain's oak-tree, and was at the door. It swung loose on its hinges, and a pile of garments on the floor within caught his eye. A great fear of what he might see when he entered possessed him. He pushed open the door, and beheld—only a rude hair-covered trunk with brass nails, the lid burst open by violence, and, strewed around, a quantity of women's dresses and old pieces of clothing. It was evident that an attempt had been made to bring some things hastily together for transportation, but that an interruption had cut the work short, never to be renewed.

Raith rushed to each of the rooms below stairs, without pausing to knock. Everything had been overturned. The feather beds and mattresses were stabbed through and through with swords. Many letters and fragments of letters lay about, some of them written in Gil's hand, some in that of Beattie. He also found the main part of an address in Mr. Peden's well-known writing, "For Marjory Simpson, spouse to William Ellison of Mayfield, wheresoever she may be, by the grace of God, at present abiding."

Up the ladder which rose within the little passage rushed Raith, now wild with fear. No Ivie there—not a sign of his mother or Euphrain. The Bass prisoners, who were to have come here, what of them? He dared not think. He was on the point of returning to the boat, when, in the dust of the trampled garden, among the pot-herbs which had been stamped out of existence, he saw a piece of paper quite unlike any of the rest. It was the leaf of a book and it stuck in the notch of a little rose-bush, as if placed there by design.

He took it in his hand. It was unfortunately torn across, as if the writer there had been caught in the act, and the greater part altogether lost.

But he read these words, in a handwriting which made Raith's heart turn to water. It was but a little corner, roughly triangular, which remained.

"Lag," was the first word clear and unmistakable. Then as the paper increased in size he read: "With four officers . . . . . . revenge on my fath. . . . . . . horses to carry us off . . . . . . where are you. . . . . . . Ivie". . . . . .

Like a man walking in a dream Raith took his way back to the boat. He found every one disembarked, waiting for news. Grif Rysland was sitting on a little sea-weedy rock gazing at the Bass, which now loomed up clear through the haze of morning. There was a thin mist about it, perfectly blue and distinct, lifting and vanishing with the coming day.

"They are gone!" said Raith hurriedly. "All—all—everything has been turned over. But I found this!"

He thrust the paper into Grif's hand.

"Ivie's handwriting!" the Captain said slowly, knitting his brows to take in the meaning of the snatches, "where got you this?"

"Outside, stuck on a rose-bush!" said Raith.

"Ah," said the elder man, "we must go back. If Ivie had time to write that, perhaps the others—Euphrain—might also have left a message."

"The others—Euphrain?"—Raith had hardly thought of that.

"But we have no time, we must pursue—at least I must."

It seemed to him that he must instantly start upon the trail, without preparation, like a dog put on a scent.

But his chief's words recalled him to his duty.

"That is impossible," said Grif, brusquely; "first we must find out all that can be learned at the cottage. Then we will hear what Allister has to say about the cave above. After that we will take counsel together. Remember, Raith, these lads have their own troubles as well as we. They have risked themselves already more than any could have expected of them. This affair is ours—yours and mine. And I, alas, for the time being am worse than useless in a chase. We must go cunningly, therefore, not like a bull at a gate."

All the same the rest had done Grif good, and now he took Raith's arm and moved toward the cottage with much less difficulty than he had shown in descending the cliff to the landing-place of the Bass.

Captain Rysland who, as Sergeant Major, had seen many military perquisitions in Scotland, at once announced that this was not an affair with which the government or the regular troops had anything to do.

"A private vengeance," he said, meditatively, "but whose? Lag I hardly know—yet we must suppose it was either he, or some of the friends of the Laird of Houston."

"She says—Lag—plainly," said Raith despondently, as he looked at the three letters which formed the familiar name of the great rough-riding, cruelty-mongering persecutor of Scotland; "there can be nothing worse than that!"

"Courage," said Grif Rysland, "there is more here than meets the eye. Four officers, Ivie says, with Lag. I know all the officers who are in Scotland—Windram, Inglis, Theo. Ogilthorpe, Douglas, Fraser, not to speak of the Grahames. Not one of them would associate with Lag if he could help it, an it were not that devil Peter Inglis! If it were any from among the regiments, it would be he. But more likely they were all of the militia, like Lag himself. Now seek carefully both above and below stairs."

As he searched Raith reported the facts, while Grif commented and drew the conclusions. The beds, though stabbed through and through, had not otherwise been disturbed. Therefore the seizure had taken place in the dusk of the evening towards bedtime. The supper had been partaken of, but not cleared completely away. At least, from the broken platters and dirty crockery lying about everywhere, it was evident that some of the captors had assisted copiously at the feast. Nothing belonging to Old Peter was found—that ancient fox kept all things compromising in more distant hiding-places than his white cottage on the shores of Cantie Bay.

Of Ivie's letter nothing more could be discovered.

Whoever saw the letter, had jerked it off the rose-bush and thrust the rest into his pocket, instead of tearing it into fragments and scattering it about.

The added information was not much, but it must suffice. By a careful sifting of all that could be gained from the aspect of the cottage of Prayerful Peter, Grif came to the following conclusions. First, the escaped prisoners had been warned in time, possibly by lights seen moving on the shore or about the cot, on the night of the liberation of the Ellisons and Mr. Peden. No trace whatever of their passage could be found. On the whole from a careful comparison of tracks leading to and from the cottage, Grif was of opinion that not more than a dozen horses had come and gone. Leaving three for the women, and putting Prayerful Peter out of account, that gave nine men at most as concerned in the carrying off.

"Some may have been spare horses," said the old soldier, shrewdly. "I have no enemies nearer than the dales of Nith and Annan, near to which Lag has property. And it is certain that coming so far they would bring a relay over and above, in the case of any of the carrying horses going lame! At least, that is what I should have advised had I been concerned in such a business!"

"But," said Raith, "Ivie only mentions five men——"

"I know—I know," said Grif, impatiently thinking forward, rejecting this and weighing the other, "but we have only a corner of the letter Ivie wrote. Besides, she mentions Lag—it may be himself in person, or more probably some retainer of his, armed with the authority of his master. But gentlemen and officers, even if only of the territorial forces, do not lead and feed horses. Depend upon it there were one or two attendants for that purpose—let us say six or seven for the whole number of those in the business."

Raith was silent, his mind a prey to the most terrible thoughts. Grif, with a pale determined face, put out a kindly hand and patted him reassuringly on the shoulder.

"If it is for Ivie you fear, be reassured," he said, "also I think for the others. But if it be an affair of vengeance against us, they must have taken your mother and sister because they were found in the same house with my daughter. They might very likely know the men, and at any rate could not be left with the power of giving information. The forceful carrying off of the women, even in times of trouble, has never been lightly treated by the law of Scotland."

"And—if it were Ivie?" said Raith, in a hoarse voice.

"If it were Ivie they sought——" Grif mused a little. "Well, in that case, the men know me. Rob Grier of Lag does, at all events. They would know me, I say. And so long as they knew that Ivie Rysland's father was in the same world with them, I do not think she has anything very terrible to fear."

Then all at once the remembrance of his interview with Captain George Teddiman came over him, as the captain of the *Swiftsure* had sat looking down on the smooth waters of the Firth.

"I have it!" he cried. "The Laird of Houston! Had he not four brothers? The captain of the *Swiftsure* said so. Do you know?"

"I have heard tell so," said Raith, to whom nothing of the Captain's conversation had been communicated.

Grif clapped his hands as one who finds a treasure, and his face looked a little less drawn.

"That is it," he said, "Lag and the young Houstons. They are all of one clan. In truth, Captain George Teddiman, if I get my hands on your good cousins, the Houstons, and it turns out as I think, why, then, you have a chance of succeeding yet to the Houston estates!"

The comfort was cold, certainly, but it was the best the two men could discover at the moment, and they had therewith to be content.

Just then Allister came along the beach in haste.

"Well," said his ex-chief as he approached, "what news of the coves?"

"Nothing," said Allister, "no one has been near them. The boat with Mr. Peden and the others must have been afraid to land. I went over to Old Peter Paton's lie-up on the other side of the Castle of Tantallon, and to one or two other little hidie-holes that he has. But no one has been there. All was safe and in good order. Only—the lads must have gotten an unco scare, I'll be bound for that.

They will have gone away to the southart. Maybe they will have put ashore about Coudenham or St. Abbs—some place where there will no be ower mony folk to look on!"

It was only a mile or two over the fields to the farm of Nether Barnton, and one of the Simpsons was soon back. Knowing the country he had run at full speed all the way, without exposing himself. But he also brought no news. All was quiet at his father's. They knew nothing there of the prisoners, who, as Allister said, must have held away to the south by sea, nor yet anything of the late tenants of Prayerful Peter's cottage at Cantie Bay. On coming back, however, Archie Simpson had encountered one of his father's herds, who had come across the trail of "an awesome pack o' muckle horses haudin' away for Gifford and Stow."

"They be nane blate," continued the shepherd, "for they gaed richt through standin' corn and ilke thing that stood in their road—either tinklers or right high gentrice they maun hae been!"

This, on the whole, was the most valuable information which had been obtained, and Grif made his compliments to Archie Simpson upon it.

"It is evident," he said to Raith Ellison, "that the fellows have come quietly along the shore road from Edinburgh. As far as Cantie Bay they were merely so many gentlemen travelling for pleasure. But once their coup made, and the net filled, they were compelled to strike for the south by the least frequented routes. What we have to do, lad, is to follow them as fast as we can."

But that, considering Captain Grif's injuries, was a thing so difficult of accomplishment that it seemed all but impossible. It was, curiously enough, the more silent of the two Simpson lads who shed the first ray of hope on the problem.

"Sir," said James Simpson, "we are in for a penny and are quite prepared to make it a pound. It will be well for us to lie quiet and see what comes of our doings on the Bass. Neither Archie nor I want to mix my father up with these matters any more than we can help. We have meant to go with Allister for a while, and perhaps help him to find Long-bodied Jack Paton and the boat-load of prisoners. But if the rogues have carried off our father's sister and our cousin Euphrain—why, it will be more to the purpose if we come and help to find them—that is, if you will accept of us."

"Yes," said Archie, "and our father will give us a horse apiece for the asking. And oh, the Peat-barrow, as we call him, would just be the easiest beast if so be you could sit on the saddle at all, Captain Grif. He carries my mother to the kirk, and gangs that steady, ye could stand on the saddle with one foot in your hand all the way!"

That was, in fact, the best arrangement possible, and Grif, with his mind set on the journey, was not long in discovering that with care, frequent rests, and judicious treatment of his burns, he might possibly begin the pursuit upon Mistress Simpson's ignominiously named Sabbath-day palfrey.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

LAG'S RAID

It was the evening of the attempt upon the Bass. The men had all gone hours before—those who were to take part in the assault on the Bass down the coast towards North Tynemouth, from a certain wild and sheltered cove between which and Tantallon John Paton's boats were to proceed, to avoid a troopment of people in so public a spot as the sea-front of Cantie Bay. As for Prayerful Peter, he betook himself over to Linton to ask the commander of the troops stationed there if he were haply in need of any good Hollands, and so, in case of any inquiry, that he might have an *alibi* of the most superior sort under his hand.

But the women abode still in the house, as is mostly the case with women. As it dusked, Ivie and Marjory Simpson remained within talking together. The love that had grown up between these two was wonderful, as Marjory Simpson said, "passing the love of men"—an article greatly overrated, so she declared.

But of this Ivie was not so sure and said so.

"That is because you are young, bairn," said Marjory, smiling indulgently.

"And did *you* think so when you were young?" demanded Ivie with an answering smile.

"Maybe, no—maybe, no—" answered the elder woman, more seriously, "'my sins and faults of youth, do Thou, O Lord, forget'—That is a bonny prayer that we shall all need to put up one day. But then the young and the fair, like you, Ivie lass, never think of that. And maybe it is as weel!"

"I know I have been often foolish," said Ivie, but left the rest of the sentence unachieved, as she had a trick of doing. The time for sincere penitence for her "faults of youth" was not yet.

Euphrain was still without, and her mother, growing vaguely unquiet, rose and went to the door to look after her. The girl was standing under the dwarf oak in the corner of the little fisher-folks' garden. She was not looking towards the Bass, the spot to which her mother instinctively turned her eyes. She gazed instead fixedly into the south, in the direction which the boats had taken. Her mother stepped out of the cottage door, and walking softly, went and touched her on the arm.

"What are you thinking of, Euphrain?" she said, gently.

The girl's pale, grave face took on a sudden flush, and she replied, "Of nothing, mother, I was only remembering that they would be getting ready the boats now."

"God help them, and guide him safely back. He is a light to the blind, and feet to them that walk in darkness. And gie me my man again, if it be Thy will!"

Marjory Simpson's prayers were short always. Seldom did she kneel to say them. Perhaps they resembled most those of the publican in the temple. Her husband and Mr. Peden would wear away a flat stone in their closets with their knees. They would spend whole nights in crying. And in this they were deeply earnest. It was of their kind and time and country. But in Marjory's "cauldrife East," as her husband called it, where most of the ministers had long ago "conformed," and where there were no "blowings of the trumpet on the mountains," nor any slaughtering of the saints of dykeback—there was yet a true and real type of piety—Marjory Simpson's kind.

And so her brief prayer was said. She repeated the last phrase only, as if it were a precious thing apart, which she could not let her God overlook.

"*And, Lord, gie me my ain màn back to me—to mysel'!*"

Suddenly Euphrain, keen of ear, and of an anxious heart, cried out, "Oh, mother—look yonder!"

She pointed up the little steep road by which the cottage of Cantie Bay communicated with the cliffs above. There was still a certain brightness all along the west, an orange hue that lingered long merging at last into a smoky red, of fuller tone than the primrose and rose-leaf of the morning—a hint of storm in it too.

But for all these things, lovely as they were, Euphrain had no eyes. What she saw and pointed out to her mother was a group of horsemen black against the dulling gold of evening. There seemed to be at least a dozen of them. For some had dismounted as if to make the descent, while certain others led each a couple of horses. The group stood clear and cleanly revealed, and then the moment after all scattered and began to descend.

"They are coming hither," said Marjory, "run to the quay and put out the lantern."

This was a little light which was to be the signal that all was safe for the landing, if the attempt to release the prisoners should have succeeded.

Euphrain flew, as she was told, and not only did she extinguish the lantern, but she tossed it into the harbour, to the great future indignation and anger of Prayerful Peter to whom the article belonged. He found it afterwards and spent hours in polishing it secretly, but as it figured in his bill of charges, it seemed to be of solid silver.

Marjory Simpson went back to the house, where she was presently rejoined by Euphrain. At first there was thought of flight, but the secret of the cove above had never been revealed to them. It had not been thought to be necessary or even desirable. Mistress Ellison was living quietly at Cantie Bay, and it was hardly likely that the government would trouble itself about two women so far from home, and so free from offence.

But before there was time for them to make up their mind in what direction to flee, five men rode up to the cottage door, having taken the steep descent of the cliff easily and without halting.

The leader was a tall man, red of face, well formed, of thirty years of age but looking older. Marjory Simpson knew him at the first glance.

"Robert Grier of Lag," she exclaimed, so loud that the man himself heard, "then God be merciful to us!"

"Maybe—maybe, goodwife of Mayfield," he said, setting his hand palm downwards on his thigh. "I and my friends here have come from Rockall, a long gate to pay you a little visit. It has been credibly reported to us that ye have one with you—nay, two, whom it will be for the good of the state to lay safely by the heels."

"I know not of whom you speak," said Marjory Simpson; "there is no one here except my daughter and this young maid."

"Well, perhaps, either of these young women may be able to enlighten us on the whereabouts of a certain Grif Rysland, whom we are seeking. He is an escaped murderer, and I have come from Edinburgh where he was seen lurking several days ago. We have traced him to this place. And" (here he bent nearer to Ivie, who shrank from his fierce and brutal face thrust into hers) "is not this pretty Mistress Rysland, the daughter of the very man we are after?"

"My name is Ivie Rysland," answered the girl, proudly, "I am Grif Rysland's daughter."

"Then where is your father?" demanded Lag in a loud and truculent voice.

"That I do not know," said Ivie, very quickly.

"Bless me—they have made quite a psalm-singer of you," cried Lag, "you have their very answer pat as butter. I had heard better of you than that. But, never fear, we have ways and means with pretty reluctant maids, Whigs or jigs—there is the match between the fingers that burns slowly to the bone—or a couple of cords around your pretty thumbs and, hey! up to the ceiling with you. You would never believe how heavy you weigh, for all that jimp wrist of yours. And yonder is Roddie Naughton, behind there, with a pair of thumbikins in his pocket——"

"That will do, Lag," said the elder of the other four, "there is not the least need for it to come to that. My dear, tell us if you have seen your father, where and at what time, and I promise you that no ill shall befall you."

For a moment Lag looked sulky, but evidently the new speaker had some hold over him, for from that moment he grew much less blusterous. He contented himself with ordering Roddie Naughton, his body servant, and three other young fellows who accompanied him (who indeed resembled rather the personal retainers of a powerful laird than regular dragoons) to search the cottage from roof to doorstep, with a torrent of imprecation upon their heads if they missed their man.

"My father," Ivie answered, steadily and calmly, "has gone away. He stayed with us certain days after he had been in Edinburgh. But he departed towards the south this very morning and I have no idea what was his destination. He did not speak of it to any here!"

"They all lie," said Lag. "The only way is to make them speak. We have the art in Galloway, as my kinswoman here can tell you."

"Indeed," said Marjory Simpson, with the softest grace in the world, "I can have no claim to be a kinswoman of the Laird of Lag save through my husband, whom he has made a prisoner in the Bass yonder, along with my son Gil, while Murdoch, my other son, is indebted to this same kinsman for a quiet resting-grave——"

"Aye, aye, goodwife," interrupted Lag, "and your youngest son, Raith, by our latest despatches was still wearing the King's coat and persecuting the saints on his own account—while, here" (he pulled from his pocket a letter) "is a screed in the clerkly hand of that sweet plant of grace, Mr. Beattie Ellison, who, under the fostering care of my Lord of St. Andrews, goeth fast and far on his way to a bishopric."

The man who had interrupted Lag before laughed lightly at this. It was better than talk of torture and thumbiking. "It is of no use to torment the poor woman," he said, "if the man has escaped us, we can e'en take what we can get. The women must come with us. And I know more than one of my young men who will envy us the company of pretty Mistress Ivie here, to say nothing of this moorland posy. Hey, Roddie, lad, no word of the old bird up above?"

"Neither hilt nor hair, my Lord, high nor low," said Roddie; "we have tumbled everything and looked at all the letters. They are naught but 'Pray-for-poor-auld-Scotland' and 'Woe-is-me-for-a-deceitful-heart'—mostly written from the Bass! Not a line from the fist of Grif Rysland, which I know very well, as indeed I should, having stood his abuse for three years!"

"Ah, then," said the other, "I must ask these ladies to make preparations for departure as quickly as may be. We have no time to lose, and the horses have far to go before the morning!"

But Lag motioned the speaker a little apart, and with him the three other young men in the dress of officers.

"My Lord," he said, "why burden ourselves with the old dame? She can do no harm here. She only knows me, and Robert Grier is every man's crawbogle. His character is past praying for in this realm. It cannot be hurt. Take the pretty wench, I say, and the other also, for this young fool at my elbow hath taken a notion to make the acquaintance of the pale Puritan from the moss-hags of Mayfield. He thinks that perhaps he might find something to say to her by the way, that would make her look less whey-faced! Heaven speed him. She has great need. But for the old dame—what use is there? She will only hamper us!"

The man who had been addressed as "My Lord" and whose attire was of a conspicuous plainness as compared with that of the militia officers, held up his hand to enforce silence.

"You are a fool, Lag," he said. "I tell you these are not your fine damsels that need but a 'Marry-come-up' to join your revels. There are few in any land to be compared with in beauty with Mistress Ivie—that I can swear to——"

Lag threw up his head and whistled mockingly.

"So my Lord is caught also?" he said; "and pray in that case what will become of our poor Steevie here, on whose behalf we were acting, and who was to combine at once love and revenge?"

"Let Steevie do the best he can for himself," said My Lord, "but mind you, I will have no insolence or indignities. Hear ye that, Robert Grier and your tail! None of your Galloway flailing! These may be lawful prize of war, but you cannot charge them either with Pentland or Bothwell Brig! And an elder woman in the party will give the youngest ones confidence. There is both sense and experience in that."

In five minutes more the three women were mounted, a man at the head of each beast guiding them carefully up the steep road. Just as they won to the top, a great white light sprang up on the Bass, mounting high into the sky, and illuminating the wide dusky plateau over which they were to ride, reddening the vast gloomy ruins of Tantallon which they kept on their left hand. It was the light from the burning gate-house of the main-guard. The first boat with the released prisoners was already well on its way, but now there was no welcoming lantern on the little pier above Cantie Bay. Well was it that Euphrain had cast it into the harbour, or Robert Grier of Lag and his friend might have made a capture that night which they little dreamed of.

As it was, they rode steadily to the south, altogether silent, avoiding town and clattering rapidly through villages, fording rivers at prearranged places, with the three women in the midst of their cavalcade—Ivie, Euphrain, and Marjory Simpson, the mother and stay of both.

And the only comfort in Ivie's heart was the thought that when her father and Raith should come and look for her, they (he) would surely find the hasty letter she had scribbled on her knee, as she went upstairs to fetch her cloak. She did not know that My Lord had it in his pocket, and that no more than a scrap was left adhering to the spines of the rose-bush.

But then, to even things a little, My Lord knew just as little about the remaining scrap.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

HOUSTON-IN-THE-HOLLOW

It was on the third day, towards evening, that the three women, almost so over-weary as to be unconscious of themselves, were commanded to dismount in front of a tall old grey-stone house with many gables and turrets. It was situated near the sea-side, for though she could not catch a glimpse of the sea, Ivie had felt the soft pad of sand under her horse's feet only a few minutes before. Also she had smelt the tang of a salt sea-weedy shore, and the air had freshened momentarily ere they turned.

But the house itself stood far back from the beach. They made their way in the deepening twilight up a narrow gully. Ivie could see that it was wooded to the top on either side, the bare white cliffs showing bleached and ghastly in the gloaming dusk. Then all at once they came upon the steep wall of a cliff, all overgrown with little bushes and chance-rooted birches and pines. The place was a manifest *cul-de-sac*. There was no further route for any horse, and if the cliff was scalable for human foot, it did not look so in the twilight. The cliffs seemed to reach almost to the zenith, and to rub out Cassiopeia herself.

They had stayed to rest during the day at unknown farmhouses, surrounding them with their armed followers, driving all the inhabitants into the barn or byre, setting a single guard with a musket over them there and adding to the number of prisoners all who approached during their period of sojourn. This being accomplished My Lord and his party took possession of the house—the troopers and servitors contenting themselves with the stables. A room was set apart for the three women. Food was served, mostly only porridge and milk, made of dark-coloured poorly-ground moorland meal, for they never stopped near a town or in the richer and more thickly populated parts of the country.

Thus they had come to their journey's end. My Lord (of whose name they were still ignorant) hastened with well-bred gravity to assist them to dismount. But the young man, slight and dark, who had been called Steevie, was already at Ivie's stirrup. He had shown himself throughout the journey careful for her wants, and of a delicacy which the others, with their loud voices and rough ways, altogether lacked.

"Chambers have been prepared for you," said My Lord.

"I trust that you will have no reason to complain. For me, I must bid you good-night. I have a little farther to go, though not far. I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you to-morrow at latest, also of learning from your own lips that you find your confinement here as little irksome as possible."

It was with no little fear that the women saw him depart. He was evidently the man among them who could, by his presence, best protect them from the brutality of Lag and this lawless crew. And indeed it was not long before they found out the difference which the restraint of his presence had made.

They were shown by a sullen old woman, keen-eyed however, and with hair thin and white but very smoothly braided, to a large upper chamber.

"This," she said, "is to accommodate the young lady!" She grinned as she nodded towards Ivie. "And you two," she added, unceremoniously, "not having been expected, must go a storey higher!"

But at this Ivie cried out instantly. She would not on any consideration be separated from her friends and companions. They would all stay here perfectly well. The room was large. There was a couch which let down in the Scottish manner, the panels being carved of ancient black oak. Ivie would gladly take that for herself.

The old woman shook her head doubtfully.

"I canna tell," she said, "beggars manna be choosers. Ye are no mistress o' this hoose that I hae heard tell o'! There has been a heap o' trouble bringin' ye here, bonny lass, and noo ye will hae to be a guid bairn and do as ye are telled—or My Lord and Steevie, no to mention Sir Robert, will ken the reason why!"

She went down-stairs, and after the women had sat and listened disconsolately enough to the loud clangour of excited voices beneath them, they heard steps come out on the hall. There were the sounds of a violent quarrel.

"I tell you I will have my way," cried a voice which was evidently that of Lag. "I have put up with My Lord's megrims because he is My Lord, but I'll be hanged, drawn, and quartered if Robert Grier will be your lap-dog, Steevie Houston, after going as far out of my way to serve you in your revenge!"

"The house is mine," said another voice, in a tone less hectoring; "my revenge, such as it is, is to myself. And if you have helped me, my brother and I too have helped you many a time when your purse was emptier than it is to-day, when it runs over with the fines of all the Whigs in three counties!"

Ivie recognized the voice of the dark slender young man who had been kind to her upon the journey. She sighed as the matter grew clear to her. Her father had slain this man's brother. The motive, then, was clearly revenge.

"Hey dey," cried Lag, "what a pother about a twopenny jilt. Why, she cast her eyes about her freely enough when she was down by Cluden side. I myself—not to speak of your brother——"

"He lied and you lie," cried the second voice, fiercer than before, "only he died for it like a man—as you may yet, if you keep not a more civil tongue in your head!"

"And pray by whose hand am I to perish?" retorted Lag, with mockery. "I hope that you do not flatter yourself, Steevie Houston, that you are the man to stand up to Robert Grier? If you do, pray step out. Roddie and his mates will get a few torches and the courtyard is wide enough."

"I am at your service," said the voice; "I do not fear you or any man that walks the earth."

"Ah, Grif Rysland?" suggested Lag, sneeringly. "You saw his blade stick a hand's-breadth out of poor Tom's back, and yet you stand there and snivel and cavil like a Whig and a coward about that man's daughter. Try her, man—try her. I'll wager the girl has more spirit than you have—aye, and will be glad of our company at supper this night, instead of being shut up in a room with a couple of praying Whiggamore Jennies and a single candle to light them to their prayers."

"She will not. I will go surety for her," said Steevie Houston, for so the conversation had sufficiently defined him. "Did you not hear the answer which old Sue Fairfoul brought down?"

"I heard," said Lag, "but that was because the others were with her. See here, I have in my hand enough evidence to drown this Marjory Ellison and her daughter, even as my brother Davie did the canting women at Wigtown. There are stakes down by the salmon-nets yonder, as good and firm as those in the Blednoch, and by my faith and word if you do not have the spirit of a man and bid the lass come down to sup with us this night I will drown the old hag and the young, to-morrow in the morning, though the Ellisons were my blood-kin half-a-dozen times over!"

"And my Lord," said Steevie Houston, "what will you answer to him?"

"Oh," cried Lag, "what I have answered before, I will answer again--that it is a pity, but the thing is done. I tell you, neither My Lord nor yet the government of London can do without Robert Grier. No, nor will they for many years, till there is not a black Whig in Galloway, nor a Whig's canting wife, nor a Whig's mealy-mouthed daughter——"

"I shall have a word to say to that last," it was a new voice which struck in now; "I see naught amiss with the maid Ellison, and that I tell you to your face!"

"Ho, dish-clout!" roared Lag, laughing and angry at once. "Steevie is good enough, and he may have to answer it in the morning if my anger holds, and his wench obeys not the summons. But you, sirrah, get you gone or I will wring your bairn's neck like a three-weeks' old pullet. Brief, by all the rents and mails of Lag and Rockall, by all the Whig fines I ever lifted or hope to lift, if this pretty sham Whiggie of yours does not come to supper with us to-night, I swear to take out both the old and the young Ellison in the morning—both old cow and the young quey, and I will drown them in Solway-tide an hour before high water. They have intercommuned. They have conventicled. They have fathers and brothers who have fought against the King. They have both written and spoken treason. In fine, I swear to do it, cost what it will, and come what may. After all, it is only for Mistress Roselips that My Lord cares a button."

The door slammed. There were no more words on the landing below, only the sound of a pair of feet coming up towards the room which the three women still occupied together. Ivie, pale and determined, had risen, and now stood near the window. She seemed to be busied changing the position of some weapon covered with a dark leather sheath. She had taken it from her garter and now put it carefully in her bosom. Marjory Simpson, sitting in her chair, saw the light of the solitary candle glint on an inch of steel, as the girl tried a spring to see that the blade slid easily.

It was the young man who had been called Steevie Houston who stood at the door. He was tall, slight, and dark, with a pale and delicate face, very different from those robustious riders, drinkers, and shouters of catches, his brothers according to the flesh. Though now the eldest of the Houston family and the heir of his dead brother, he yet looked the youngest by a dozen years.

"I ask your pardon, ladies," he began, "but I am commissioned to ask if any of you—if Mistress Ivie Rysland in particular, would accept of our poor hasty hospitality. I know it must be a thing repellent, after the way you must think yourself treated. But—but—if you would—I think it might be wiser. Sir Robert is much set upon it. He is a dangerous enemy—so if one of you——"

"Certainly I will come!" said Ivie, her voice clear and unmoved, not a tremor breaking her calm utterance. "I shall come down and sup with you, Mr. Stephen Houston, and with your associates. Be good enough to let these ladies be served here in my chamber."

A princess could not have said it with more dignity.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

THE DUEL IN THE HALL

THE Banqueting hall of the Great House of Houston-in-the-Hollow was one of those long low chambers, panelled, both as to ceiling and walls, with black bog oak, which had been built, fitted, and decorated in the midst of the sixteenth century in Scotland, just as the feudal castles with their arrow slots and tall gloomy keeps were one by one disappearing, and when the Scottish château, adapted from the French, and the acknowledged child of the Auld Alliance, was taking its place.

To-night both Houston-in-the-Hollow and its dining-room were ablaze with light. Old Sue Fairfoul, the housekeeper, who during the widowhood of the present laird's father, was believed to have been raised to her responsible position by ardent favouritism, bewailed from the bottom of her miserly heart the extravagance of the scores of wax candles which burned in the candelabra, and the cobwebby bottles of claret and Burgundy that had to be carried in basketfuls up from the cellar. Things were differently ordered in *his* time. But oh, these young men!

"And a' to please that thief o' a Rab Grier," she grumbled, "that near ruinated puir Tam, and a' to do honour to this licht-o'-luve for the sake o' wha's bonny face he gat a sword stappit in his vitals. Sirce me, set her up! Indeed—was I no bonny yince on a day, or else mony a yin forbye the laird telled a lee! But nae man was ever brought bloody hame i' the mornin' because o' me! Na, na, Susan Fairfoul had principles, and a deal mair respect for hersel' than that ony decent man should come to the bier and the mort-claith for her hard heart!"

And now happened a strange thing and marvellous. For when Ivie had made herself ready to go down according to her promise, Euphrain, who had never shown any great affection toward the girl, being of a nature opposite, and perhaps no little jealous of her standing with her mother, for the first time broke through her reserve and begged Ivie hard to remain with them. But Marjory Simpson, who understood far more of the nature and equipment of Grif Rysland's daughter for the thing that was before her, simply bade her go, and God be with her!

No change of dress being possible, Ivie washed away the stains of travel, arranged her hair as best she could, passing her wet fingers through the little clinging curls about her brow, and kissing Marjory and Euphrain, went down. The men were waiting for her. Lag and the younger Houstons gave her noisy greeting. There was a ring of triumph in Lag's great voice—triumph and the contempt he had for womenkind.

"Did I not tell you," he had said as he heard the door close above, "that she would come—aye, and be glad of the chance? Trust these brisk little beauties that have followed the wars. Their blood flows naturally to the sound of a drum, and they cannot resist a red coat—no, not the sagest of them!"

Stephen Houston offered his arm at the door as the guest of the night came in smiling. But if any had known Ivie Rysland, there was also a certain look in her eye that was dangerous. Among the men there was a little movement of their hands towards their sword-hilts as if to make the arch of honour, which at that time was the acknowledged homage of such to their beauties of a night. But something about the girl arrested the intention—some subtle suggestion of her father as he unsheathed his sword that morning in the Kersland quarry-hole.

Ivie Rysland had changed greatly of late, but she had passed all her life among soldiers, and time had been when a supper party at Grif Rysland's modest lodging brought together the bravest men on the army roster—the bravest and the handsomest. Among such the daughter of the host had sat and queened it, proud, light-hearted, unconscious of evil, daring quip and repartee with the buttons off the foils, and playing the game of fence with all comers without fear or favour.

And knowledge like that, gained in such fashion—the knowledge how beauty and wit in woman can make a little thing of man, is never lost. It persists in spite of all—though it may be unused,—ready to flash out like a duelling sword from its case.

Ivie found herself at the head of the table between Stephen and the Laird of Lag. Beneath them on Sir Robert's side were Bauldie and Hurst Houston, both big hairy giants, great toss-pots and oath-crackers of his own breed, lacking only the innate cruelty of their chief to be as celebrated as himself. On the other side, next to Stephen, sat the youngest of all, David Houston—he who had cared for Euphrain on the journey, and who for reasons of temper stood a little apart from the others—being if anything inclined to his elder brother's party. Stephen Houston had, during Tom's noisy reign at Houston-in-the-Hollow, passed most of his time in London, where he lived quietly on a little money which had come to him from his mother. During this time David had been of little account, but had been compelled to shout with the multitude who rode on Lag's errands, whether he liked it or not. Since Steevie's return, however, and the beginning of what promised to be a new dynasty at Houston, David had rallied to his elder brother's side. Bauldie and Hurst swore that this was for what he could get out of the cupboard. But really young David had never taken kindly to the chasing and catching of neighbours, or to the shootings and hangings of unfortunate wanderers.

Among these strangely assorted men Ivie now found herself. Never had she looked so tall, so graceful, and so perfect in beauty. The little changing fireflakes in her eyes seemed actually to dance like jets which break upward from a tall flame as it flicks in the wind, mounts a moment, and then vanishes. There was almost a joy on her face, perhaps the same joy of combat which shone more sternly on her father's countenance on the eve of battle. But in Ivie's case it tinged her cheeks with Raith's dawn-pink, delicate as the first flush of day seen very far up, while her lips were full and fresh with the scarlet of pomegranate blossom.

"It was well-done to come down to charm half-a-dozen soldiers with your smiles," said Lag, with his rough half-jesting familiarity, "though I betted that you would accept —with pleasure!"

"Sir," said Ivie, "you have lost your bet. I hope you will pay it!"

This was a first shot in the white. For Lag, though a great gamester, and as full of random bets as of unminced oaths, found it not always so convenient to pay, as indeed the late Tom Houston had found to his cost.

"And how may I have lost my bet, my fair lady?" laughed Lag,—"seeing that here you are!"

"You wagered, according to your own words, that I would come with pleasure. I came not with any pleasure, seeing that I am brought away I know not where, against my will, and summoned as at the sword's point to feast with my enemies."

"Say rather with your father's enemies, mistress," said Lag; "I take it no one of us is cruel enough of heart to be pretty Ivie's enemy!"

"My father's enemies are mine," said the girl, "but Grif Rysland is a soldier of fortune, and is wont to bear the brunt of his own enmities. Yet because he is not here to answer for himself—why, I will!"

"Hear!" cried all the Houstons together, Stephen alone remaining silent, "soundly answered, Lag. Let us say no more about enmity. Drown it all in a cup of claret!"

"With all my heart," said Lag. "I would not be thought so ungallant as to dispute with so fair a neighbour!—At least I would prefer to choose the subject of our disputation! Will you drink a glass with me, sweet mistress?"

"I do not drink wine," said Ivie, quietly, "but I will pledge you heartily in water to quit roistering and learn a better trade!"

At this again the others laughed, and Lag, who saw himself worse and worse supported as Ivie's bright smile began to do its work, at last was fain to join also.

Ivie sat at the table-head, and the men, one after the other, pledged her. For each she had a glance and a ready reply. She had stories to tell of campaigns in Holland and sieges in the Rhine Provinces—of the Stadtholder, the Great Prince of Orange, the King's son-in-law, at the mention of whom even Lag pricked up his ignorant ears.

She dominated these men, who were her captors, and some of whom had thought to bring her among them as a scoffing and a merry jest. She knew so much more than them all put together. She could talk. There was besides, the eternal witchery of her smile. They even forgot to drink, as they listened breathless—all but Lag, who, being accustomed to take the first place in that company as in every other where he cared to go, subsided into sulky silence and plied himself with wine which he drank down tankard after tankard.

The dinner was over. The servants had withdrawn, and still the four Houstons sat listening entranced. Never had they heard anything so bewitching as this girl, when to please was her will.

All at once the wild beast which always slumbered in Lag burst out, his temper and the wine he had drunk combining to madden him.

"We must have you up to court, pretty Ivie," he said. "I have always heard it said that such a merry wench was thrown away on cast-iron men like John Grahame and dolts like Tom Houston. Come to court with me, my lady, and I swear to make your fortune! Portsmouth's late favour and little Mistress Eleanor's will be nothing to ours!"

For an instant the girl sat silent, paling slowly to the lips.

"I—do not understand—what you mean," she said slowly, "but if my father was here—*he* would answer you. I cannot. I will leave you. You have drunk too much!"

"Tut," cried Lag, "you are no Puritan, lassie. I know better. It becomes not a pretty maid. Say you will come, and I will write to Rochester to-morrow. He manages these court receptions! What matter if it angers My Lord!"

Ivie glanced about her. A riding-whip lay on a side-table, where it had been flung on entering by Lag himself. Ah, there was an answer to her hand!

"My father is not here," she said, "so I must answer for myself!"

And with a motion of her hand as swift as lightning, she seized the whip by the heavy handle and standing erect, she lashed Lag with all her force first across one side of the face and then across the other as if he had been a restive horse.

He sprang at her, roaring with open mouth, the marks of the thong white across his bloated furious countenance.

"I will kill her, the infamous little Sergeant's wench!" he shouted. He was almost upon the girl, when Ivie, drawing back, unsheathed the little dagger which her father had given her years ago, in case the Prince's camp might be taken by the soldiers of that Most Christian monarch Louis the Great.

"Hold," she cried, "one inch nearer, and I put this where it will rid the land of one foul rascal."

Two of Lag's companions held him back, foaming and stamping with passion. "She struck me," he shouted, "I tell you I will have her blood—her blood—her blood!"

Each time he pronounced the word with increasing fury.

"Very well," said Ivie, "you can have my blood if you can get it. Come, my father is not here to spit you. You need a little blood-letting by the look of your face. Now I will fight you—I, a girl—that is, if Sir Robert Grier is not afraid!"

"I do not fight with girls," he muttered, becoming suddenly more articulate.

"No," she answered scornfully, "you drown them tied to stakes in the river—or you get your brother to do it, which is the safer. But I am not afraid. I am no poor Margaret of Wigtown that can only chant a psalm. Perhaps I am none the better of that. But my father taught me the sword-play—aye, better sword-play and prettier than that of any petty militia-man who can but stick on his horse and slash at cabbages. Come," she cried again after a pause, "you would have my blood. Well, get a couple of rapiers—I will give you your choice. I take the other. What—still coy? Well, another touch or two of the whip, Sir Robert, may serve to raise your courage!"

During this scene a man had entered unobserved, pushing aside the curtains at the farther end of the dining-room with his hand. He had stood there, smiling well-pleased all through the altercation. Almost he had sprung forward when Ivie lashed Lag across the face, but again restraining himself, he stood half hidden by the curtain and unobserved by all, till at this moment his words cleft the turmoil with a sense of accustomed power.

"There is, I think, no other course open to you with any honour, Sir Robert," he said. "It was lonely over at the castle, so seeing your lights, I rode over here, and am rewarded by arriving in time to tender my services to this young duellist. She has thrashed you, sir, and challenged you! And now, you must fight! Or—by heavens, sir, I will have you stripped of His Majesty's commission and drummed out of the service!"

"But must I fight a girl?" cried Lag, furiously, looking this way and that as if for a way of escape.

"Aye, fight you must—or be beaten twice like a dog! Once would be enough for some men, but we all knew that the Laird of Lag is long-suffering when it comes to risking his skin!"

"Devil's on't! But you shall answer for this—aye, you, my Lord of Liddesdale though you be!"

"In good time, sir, one at a time," retorted the other calmly, "but perhaps you would rather that I should have a little salve applied to the cuts on your face—since you will not accept the ordinary salve of gentlemen for their wounded honour!"

"I will have the blood of the insolent slut who did it!" cried Lag, the smarting of his face and My Lord's feathered arrows telling on his vocabulary.

"Well, give him a rapier," cried My Lord; "no, not that cadger's load of metal, fit only for a wild Highlandman to heave up and cry, 'Claymore.' But something like this—dainty and light, like a pen in the hand of a ready writer! Ah that is better!"

He turned to Ivie, bowing courteously.

"I offer you mine," he said, "it is a good blade and has been tried. There—measure it with the other. They agree to a hair! Well, sir, though my principal is of a sex that seldom puts finger to steel, I think I can promise you no advantage, if all that is true that I heard from the officers of His Majesty's Royal regiment of Dragoons!"

My Lord Liddesdale, now thoroughly in his element, bade the Houstons clear away the dining table, putting it to one side, and distributing the lights so as to fall equally. At last the unusual combatants were put into position. Lag, now recovered from his wine, was perfectly drunk with anger and fury. His eyes injected, and his hand trembling, he listened without answering to the taunts of Liddesdale.

"Of course, Sir Robert, even now—if you would rather have another taste of the whip, and prefer that I should tell the matter to my Lords at the Council table—Queensberry and Tarbert, and to the officers of His Majesty——"

"Blood and death," Lag spluttered, "I will kill the wench and then I will kill you—My Lord Secretary of State. That at least will shut your mouth—though I swing for it!"

"Ah, a better spirit," cried My Lord; "on guard, then, while his valorous fit lasts!"

The duel was fought in the long low dining-room of Houston-in-the-Hollow. Ivie wore the simple dress in which she had been carried off from the cottage in Cantie Bay, only fastening up her sleeves to the elbow.

Lag, thoroughly infuriated by the pain and shame of the lash, and stung still more by the quips and threats of Lord Liddesdale, fell to with instant fury, waiting for no formalities. At first he tried to use his superior height, striking blindly, scarcely stopping to defend at all, but continuing to attack with a concentrated fury.

Ivie, whose instruction from her father had been continuous from the time when she had searched for tall reeds out of the Friesland marshes to fence with bearded swordsmen of a dozen German principalities, could have played with this, considered merely as fencing. But Lag's superior strength, and the fury in which he was, compelled her to keep strictly to the defensive, at least till she had tired the edge of the attack.

The men stood about, uncertainly watching, save only Hurst, who acted as Lag's second, and My Lord, who took the direction of the whole combat, both as being the man first in rank and also as having had by far the greatest experience of such events. From the crossing of the blades he saw that Ivie stood in no danger. Her command of her weapon was perfect, and almost without appearing to move, she used the slender blade so that it became an impenetrable buckler which this strong and furious man tried in vain to break through!

His ill-success made Lag yet angrier, and like a chained mastiff which sees his enemy but cannot reach him, his words now came in sputtering bursts of foulest abuse.

"Enough," said Ivie. "Shall we say the right arm? That will keep him the longest out of mischief!"

And the next moment, after a feint low in tierce, Ivie ran her adversary through the shoulder just below where the right arm is bound to the shoulder-blade.

Lag's rapier fell ringing to the floor and he himself, suddenly faint, slipped sideways into the arms of Hurst and his brother Archibald. The colour went slowly from his face, but the anger deepened and darkened on his brow.

"Quick," he cried, "give me a pistol and I will end it—to be run through by a girl—a girl!"

"But such a girl!" said My Lord. "Why, man, drink down a goblet of Burgundy to her health and pick up heart! I would hold it an honour! A girl—yes, but I will wager my lands there is not the like of her in Scotland. By the King's head, if I were not wedded to a wife that is much like to outlive me—but I beg your pardon, Mistress Ivie, my tongue runs from my sense! And I have no desire to try the temper of my own steel wielded by your fair arm!"

"And now," he cried, "shake hands, and forgive! Ah, but you must, sir! If you do not, I swear I will have it all over the country to-morrow! If you do, and bear the lady no grudge, I warrant you on my honour that no one here shall ever mention it. You are a man in the way of rough usage, and have had a tough ride of it these last days. You might very well have gotten your hurt in a ruffle with a score of skulking Whigs as you came through the Muir of Talla! Out with your hand, man, or never more be officer of mine!"

And so thus it came to pass that that night, the first of her imprisonment at Houston-in-the-Hollow, Ivie Rysland did, with a good heart, take the hand of her father's enemy, Sir Robert Grier of Lag.

* * * * * *

In five minutes afterwards, she was sobbing her heart out on the shoulder of Marjory Simpson.

"Oh, it is no use," she cried, "I am just the girl I used to be, and I thought I should be so different. It is all no use!"

"Tell me," said Marjory, quietly patting her shoulder, "and cry just as much as ever you wish." After she had heard all the tale the wise woman Marjory summed up.

"God," she said, "who never makes anything without a reason, made you the girl you are, so that you might do the deed you have done to-night. Had you stricken the blade through his foul persecuting heart, you would have done the world the better service. But even so much is good!"

For these were the Killing Times, and in his mother's ear the blood of Murdoch Ellison still cried from the ground.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

IVIE'S HAND IS KISSED

"You shall answer to me for this," cried Lag, "my Lord of Liddesdale—it was you who set the she-cat upon me!"

His Lordship waved his hand slightingly.

"All in good time, friend," he said, "when you are well over the she-cat's present scratches, I may humour you—so far, at least, as to chastise you for calling a lady by such a name. In the meanwhile, Sir Robert Grier of Lag, you are a young man, and I pardon you much, but, be good enough not to forget that I am His Majesty's Secretary of State, and as such have a right to commit all brawlers and peace-breakers to the King's prison!"

"Also," said Lag, with a sneer, "all such as uplift and carry off women against their will."

The Secretary laughed, and bending over regarded with interest the work of Roddie, Lag's confidential serving-man, who with hands and teeth was pansing and bandaging the wound of his master with as much calmness as if it had been an everyday task, or more exactly, an accident which had befallen one of the troop-horses on the march.

"Ah," he said, "you forget, Sir Robert, I am accountable only to the King. I have my duty to perform, and I have my own ways of doing it. If I rode to Cantie Bay to arrest a notorious duellist and the slayer of the Laird of Houston your friend and my neighbour, who is there in Scotland to find fault with me? And if I gave these ladies my company, it was because I was on my way home to Kingsberry and to my Lady the Countess. Also it was no light thing to leave a trover so precious in the hands of half-a-dozen reckless blades like Steevie there and the Laird of Lag."

"And does your Lordship mean to stay here in this house of Houston-in-the-Hollow, and guard this precious treasure in person?" asked Lag. "Surely in time His Majesty's service might begin to suffer!"

"What, Robert," cried my Lord Liddesdale, smiling, "thou art a wit. Getting a lady to send a little steel through your shoulder begins to purge you of gross humours. But I will ease your mind. Late as is the hour and weary as the ladies must be, I propose to conduct them immediately to Kingsberry with a fitting retinue."

"It is a great honour," sneered Lag, "but I am not sure that Captain Grif Rysland will see it in that light! Or, let me add, my Lady the Countess of Liddesdale when she comes to hear of it!"

"As for Captain Grif Rysland, I cannot answer," said the Earl, smiling, "but for the Countess, I am better informed, being the bearer of an invitation on her behalf, and a prayer that the three ladies shall instantly repair to Kingsberry as her guests!"

"The Countess . . . at Kingsberry?"

"Certainly," said My Lord. "Steevie, be good enough to order out your men to attend us. Bid your brothers get fresh horses. Provide three suitable for the ladies, and light me yourself to the ladies' chamber. Or—stay. First dispatch that unamiable ancient housekeeper to say that his Excellency the Secretary of State wishes a word with them, and prays that they will pardon the lateness of the hour and the instancy of the request, which only the unusual nature of the circumstances could excuse."

With a very doleful countenance Stephen Houston obeyed. He called his brothers, now sobered by the sharp encounter of which they had been witnesses, and still more by the unexpected appearance of their powerful neighbour amongst them so inopportunely. Sue Fairfoul departed upstairs to prepare the ladies for the Secretary's visit, and Lag, whom Roddie had turned out a finished article, looked at every one with a malignant eye. He was already meditating a revenge which would settle all scores at one blow. It was a good thing, he reflected, that he was so near his own country. If his shoulder mended fast, he could easily call up his men, now scattered in a score of little garrisons, and after that—well, the egg was in his brain, but the serpent's brood was not yet hatched.

"Steevie," cried My Lord, looking at him curiously, "why so sober, lad? Have you not seen enough to know that men do not wreak vengeance on women? Revenge your brother's death on Grif Rysland, an you will. That is your right. But, by the King's head, it must not be on his daughter! What a girl, Steevie! What a pearl among all girls! Did you see her pick her place and send my little Frenchman home into Lag's shoulder like a marksman pinning the gold of the target?"

But Stephen Houston still stood silent, looking down. My Lord patted him on the back with a somewhat unusual gentleness.

"May I never pull cork again," he cried, "if I do not believe that our little Stephen's heart is touched! Well, but it will not do, Steevie! After all, there is Tom, and it is your duty to have that matter out with Captain Grif. If he fences better than his daughter, I fear your chances are not great. But you can always choose the pistol. The trigger evens skill not a little. But, seriously, was there ever such a girl since this ancient realm of the Scots rose out of the sea? Her Ladyship will be delighted with her. Come over to-morrow to Kingsberry, and try a bout at the foils. The little one may let you into a trick or two which may be of use against her father, when it comes to regulating poor Tom's affair. And never be sulky, man, with an old friend who wishes you well. First of all, it is hanged uncivil. And secondly, consider how much more after the genius of correction it is, that so pretty a maiden should be under the protection of my Lady of Liddesdale at Kingsberry—rather than here in the lone house of Houston-in-the-Hollow with only that wicked old Sue Fairfoul and half-a-dozen roystering bachelors—even though one of them is a little stiff about the shoulder-blade!"

"It strikes me, My Lord," said Stephen, "that your Lordship has but recently taken these responsibilities to heart."

"Possibly—possibly, child," said Liddesdale, easily; "I am a fatherly man, and wish well to all the young, even if they chance to be Whigs——"

"Especially when they are pretty," interjected Lag from his couch, no longer able to restrain himself.

"Do not suffer the smart of the lady's whip to keep your shoulder inflamed," said My Lord, "quiet, Sir Robert, quiet is much enjoined by the faculty of surgeons—an easy mind, a cheerful disposition, bright society. As soon as you are well enough, I shall ask my Lady to invite you over to Kingsberry, where (I doubt not) Mistress Ivie will have the complaisance to give you a few lessons in fencing—most necessary, Sir Robert, if I may judge by what I have seen."

The words of Lag's reply were unintelligible, but the tone did not escape the Secretary of State. He laughed easily, however, again recommended an equable temper, and took leave of the wounded man, pleasantly offering to convey any friendly message he might wish to send to his late fair and gallant antagonist.

By this time Sue Fairfoul, with an amusingly affronted aspect, conveyed to her master the intelligence that the "persons in the great chaumer" were prepared to speak with My Lord.

"Guide us to the ladies' apartment, then, housekeeper," ordered Liddesdale. So they took their way upstairs. Sue Fairfoul (now much more foul than fair, as to the expression of her face) preceding them, in each hand a tall wax candle in a silver candlestick. Next came My Lord, and followed him Stephen Houston, an expression of rooted gloom on his sallow countenance, and the shadows thrown by the lights deepening his constitutional melancholy.

They went upstairs to the large chamber in which they found Marjory Simpson, Euphrain, and Ivie. The three women stood, fully dressed, near the fireplace. Mother and daughter were close together, and Ivie, now very pale, had withdrawn a little deeper into the shade.

My Lord bowed low, and then looked at Stephen Houston as if at a loss how to proceed.

"Pray introduce me to these ladies," he said, at length.

"This is his Excellency the Earl of Liddesdale, Secretary of State for Scotland, and Lieutenant General of the Kingdom," said Stephen, wearily.

"First, then," said My Lord, "I must apologise for disturbing you so untimeously, but what I have to say cannot well be put off."

"That we are weary, is true," answered Marjory Simpson, "that we are ignorant of the cause of our present treatment is also true. But since the affair has been carried out with the knowledge and by the assistance of Lord Liddesdale, we are ready to hear what he may have to say to us!"

The Earl winced a little at what Marjory's words implied.

"With the knowledge—yes," he said, "but what I did was meant to save you from worse things. And now" (his voice suddenly recovered its cheerfulness) "I have the honour to convey to you the invitation of my wife, the Lady Countess of Liddesdale, that you shall immediately place yourself under her protection, and accept of her hospitality at our Castle in Kingsberry. It is only a matter of a short mile. I have ordered a suitable escort—a litter for madame the Lady of Mayfield, and ponies for the younger ladies!"

"We are at the Countess's service," said Marjory Simpson, "but I would have your Excellency note that I am no Lady of Mayfield, but only the wife of William Ellison, farmer in that place."

"I crave pardon. I but used the ancient Scottish style," smiled the Earl. "If your husband is the Laird of Mayfield, you are the Lady thereof. Forgive me, it is the custom of our countryside here, if not of yours!"

More than once he looked across to where Ivie stood, still very pale, the traces of tears yet on her face. She remained silent, however, and the Earl forbore any desire to compliment her on her performance in the dining-room.

"She has been overstrained," he thought, "a week of Barbara will set that right!"

But as he went out with the words, "In five minutes all will be ready," he made Ivie a bow of special grace and depth.

Torches of resin and tow, dipped in pitch and bound about with little wire baskets, were blazing in front of the house of Houston-in-the-Hollow, throwing a weird glow as of conflagration into the unblinded windows of the main staircase. As the torch-bearers changed their positions without, the shadows of the bannisters danced a weird dance and old Sue Fairfoul with the pair of silver candlesticks in her hands grimaced like one of Satan's own witches muttering curses amid the flickering flames of the pit. Curses she was indeed repeating, as fast as her tongue could trip it. Yet these were most strangely mingled with blessings and God-speeds. For was not the bonny face of Ivie Rysland, for the sake of which one of her roaring lads had already perished, on the point of departing for ever from under the roof of Houson-in-the-Hollow.

"And the invitation o' the Countess?" she muttered, "a likely story! But far be it frae auld Sue Fairfoul to contra' it, seein' that the hoose will be weel rid o' her afore she has completely cast the glamour ower puir Maister Steevie—whilk she was doin', oh, I ken it weel! Already he is gaun aboot like a new-speaned calf that has nocht but the kitchen dish-clout to sook!"

The three women came down the stairs, the two girls supporting on either side the tired steps of Marjory Simpson. Ivie had recovered her courage and some of her colour, somehow she always did so in the company of men, whose mere presence braced her to show herself at her best, and this wholly without coquetry or taking of thought.

The door of the great dining-room was open as they passed and she could see Lag lying on a couch, with Roddie his man still bending over him. Ivie stepped quietly to the porch and laying her hand on the lintel, said, "Sir Robert, I am sorry that you are wounded."

"Humph," growled Lag, without so much as looking at her, "you will be sorrier yet one day!"

"Come away," said My Lord, "the wild boar is a noble beast, but when it comes to courtesy, he were a fool who would expect more from him than a grunt!"

They were standing in the hall, the horses stamping impatiently without in the unaccustomed glare of the torches, and the raw chill of night, heavy and airless with the damp mist of the gorge, setting Marjory coughing. Quite suddenly and unexpectedly Stephen Houston came forward like one who has a message to deliver.

"Before you leave this house—my house," he said, in a clear level voice which Sue Fairfoul heard looking over the stairway balusters and Lag as he lay smarting on his couch, and which brought in My Lord to hear something new,—"before you three ladies, and especially you, Mistress Ivie, depart from the threshold of my house, I have something to say. First there is humbly your pardon to ask—yours chiefly—but also that of your friends, who have been made partners in your misfortunes.

"Your father slew my brother—as I understood, for your sake. I saw him die. That day as he lay in my arms I swore to have vengeance. I swore to slay the slayer though I myself should die. With this intention my neighbours, the Lord Liddesdale and my brother's friend Sir Robert Grier of Lag, accompanied me to the place where, as our information assured us, Captain Grif Rysland was residing. He was not there, but instead we found you, his daughter, and these your friends. Then an evil spirit of the pit tempted us—me perhaps chiefly. I had believed the things which had been told us concerning the death of my brother. But on the journey—nay, so soon as I set eyes on Mistress Ivie Rysland, I knew that he who first uttered them, and all who had ever since repeated them, had lied as falsely as hell itself—the which I am now at liberty to maintain.

"Hour by hour, day by day there has been born a new thing in my heart, and what began as hatred and vengeance, has become first admiration and then love."

"Bravo, Steevie," broke in My Lord, "but why keep us waiting here in the damp till you have declared yourself? Were it not better to come over to the Countess to-morrow, and have it out with all the forms?"

"No," said Stephen, "hear me out! Shamefully was this true maid brought to this house of Houston—my house! But I wish her to know ere she leaves it, that if at any time she has need of the life, of the sword, or of the heart and hand of Stephen Houston, they are hers and hers alone—as his most humble and loving respect are hers now and always! I bid you good-night, my sweet lady!"

And going forward he bent on one knee and kissed Ivie's hand before every one, the serving men standing gaping as at a play, and his brothers, like jealous rivals in the wings, muttering to each other behind their hands.

"Steevie always was a fool." That was the burden of their speech.

Naturally it was My Lord who first recovered himself.

"Good lack, Steevie," he cried, "this is public enough, and I see not that any of the forms have been omitted. But as for the lady's answer, good Steevie, it would not be kind to press her. She is wearied. She has lost a father, won a lover and pinked a King's officer all in the space of a hundred miles. That is surely enough to entitle the lady to speak when it pleases her. So come to-morrow for your answer but not betimes. I shall see to it—I mean the Countess will, that the lady sleeps late. But ride over for your four-hours, Steevie, and your answer shall be waiting. You shall have my good word, so far as that may go."

"I will not, My Lord," said Stephen Houston, abruptly. "I know my answer already. I but wished to make the lady such amends as I could."

"Tush, man," said My Lord, "'tis bad enough and foolish enough to take a woman's NO after it has been repeated a dozen times over. But to invent it for yourself, that touches the very nadir of folly, Steevie, so my lady Countess will expect you to-morrow for your four-hours. Do not disappoint her."

"My compliments to the Lady Countess," said Steevie, "but she will expect in vain."

"Steevie," cried My Lord, "I overlook the rudeness of the form, in consideration of the perturbation of your spirit. But in any case, help the ladies to mount. Let me conduct you, madam, to your litter. Davie, where are your manners? Help Mistress Euphrain. You were forward enough upon the journey! But no declarations *à la* Steevie, mind. Or we shall all have the devil to pay to-morrow with cold in our windpipes!"

Then Stephen Houston, his head bare, helped Ivie to her saddle. Neither spoke, nor looked at each other, and with a cry from My Lord, and a wild swinging of torches to make them burn the brighter, the procession filed away into the dark. Stephen stood on the topmost step and watched them out of sight, his eyes on one slender figure. He watched motionless till the glare had become but a smoky loom, and last of all only the faintest skarrow in the sky, ruddying the low-lying clouds of night.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

LAG TAKES COUNSEL

Then Stephen Houston turned and went indoors. Old Sue Fairfoul met him and shook a trembling hand in his face.

"This is more than enough," she cried, "to make your poor murdered brother turn in his grave—that ye should speak such words to that soldier's hussie!"

Instantly Stephen was himself again. He was glad to be angry.

"That reminds me," he said, "I warn you to turn out of this to-morrow. You have been overlong about the House of Houston. A pension and a cot in which decently to hide your head, you shall have. But be ready with your accounts and your keys to-morrow. I will receive them myself!"

"And Susan Fairfoul, that has carried them for thirty years, what of her?" said the old woman, fumbling with the tinkling bunch at her girdle. "But waes me—new men—new manners! I dootless ye will be getting the house ready for the new mistress. But ye'll hear a tale or twa or ye are wed. Solway-side is a fine country to be married in."

"You at least shall be ten miles from Houston," said Stephen, "and if you come nearer for any purpose whatever, I swear you shall lose your pension."

After Stephen had gone up to his room (from whence he looked long in the direction of the Earl's Castle of Kingsberry), Lag called softly to his manservant.

"Roddie," he said, "what think ye of this pin-prick of mine? How long will it keep me here? Ye have skill of such like; more than twenty leeches!"

Roddie glanced grimly at his master.

"That," he said, "depends greatly on how long your honour wishes to stop in the neighbourhood."

"I do not want to remain at all," Lag answered, impatiently, "this moment I would be going. There is work to be done. I must have my revenge before My Lord grows on the alert."

"Hum," said Roddie, rubbing first his shaven chin and then his closely cropped head, "but I thought——"

"You thought what?" said his master fiercely, "out with it, villain!"

"That mayhap your idea of vengeance might lie—over there!" And he pointed towards Kingsberry, satisfactorily indicating the direction by jerking his thumb over his shoulder.

His master shook his head at his servant, and then winked at him with the brutal frankness which was his only virtue.

"Nay, Roddie," he said, "you and me may birsle together. There is little doubt of that if the godly prophesy aright. But there is no need for us to jump into the fire here on earth. My Lord is the great man, and I, Robert Grier, and you, his man Roddie, are but two roughriding carles that think as little of sending a score or twa of Covenant Saints to a better world, as of clipping the heads off so mony thistles while we dauner by the roadside. But do not let us deceive ourselves, that is all the use My Lord has for the like o' us! Still, my lad, there are some few on their road hither that I would like to encounter before My Lord meets them. I have private information, Roddie. I showed Liddesdale but one of the letters writ by that fause hound Beattie Ellison. But there was an enclosure, a back letter, and as ye have ever been a faithful servant, Roddie, and never turned squeamish or questioned my will, I will tell you, Roddie, the more that ye may have a shrewd guess as to what had better be done. But as far as I can see, Roddie, if only I could travel, I could trap the lot. And my justice's warrant could stand as good to do for them in front of a firing party, before ever My Lord could lift a finger to sign a pardon."

Roddie listened with his ear turned a little towards his master. He was somewhat deaf, but, like many such, he would have died rather than own it.

"If your Honour is inclined to let him hear the bit enclosure," he said, "Roddie is ready to listen!"

"This it is then," said Lag, putting his hand into the breast of his coat, and drawing out a thin pocket-book, which, as his most precious possession, contained his commission to pursue and take, and if need be to shoot after summary trial, by authority of the King, any refusing the Test, or otherwise rebels against his authority. Lag looked lovingly at this document, and read the last clause aloud.

"*And with power to shoot after summary trial . . . any rebels against his authority.*"

"That," he said, "covers the case . . . all the cases!"

"And the letter?" said Roddie, who was noted for keeping steadily to the matter in hand, whether it might be the trail of a moss-hag wanderer, or the depluming of a pigeon at the *cartes*, when in their chosen tavern the men-at-arms played lasquenet or picquet.

Lag looked around cautiously and inclined his ear to the door.

"See that no one is about," he said, "and that soft head, Steevie, gone to his bye-bye. The others, I know, have not returned."

Roddie went to the door. Old Sue Fairfoul was still lingering uncertainly about the hall, whom Roddie ordered instantly upstairs for a spying old witch, adding such other compliments as occurred to him.

"Then ye will maybe open the door, and serve the gentrice if they come in cryin' for mulled wine this raw unkindly night," she retorted, standing her ground, or rather trying to do so. But Lag's roar from his couch, like a tiger from his lair, frightened her upstairs grumbling under her breath.

"Roddie," said Lag, "that wife has gotten her fee and her leave. She's Sawtan's ain darling—but she is bound to ken a heap about the house o' Houston—considering the nature o' her service in the old Laird's time—aye, and Tam's too—much about My Lord, too, doubtless. Did ye hear Steevie, the cuif? He is feared o' her, or he would never have forbidden her to come within ten miles o' Houston! What say ye? Shall we settle her in auld Lucky Bidden's yett-house? It will cost but little, and she will see nae mair than she is paid to see. What think ye, Roddie?"

"We'll see,—we'll see, Laird," answered that privileged attendant, "but let us hear the letter. It will not take lang to read by the look of it—there's but little ink wasted, I'm thinking!"

With that Lag opened out and read the last information of Beattie Ellison, traitor.

"I have writ the above inclosure more for the public eye, not knowing who may be in your company when this comes to your hand. But I add a private word to tell you first, that Grif Rysland and Raith the dragoon, sometime soldiers of the King, have treacherously united to release the prisoners on the Bass—among others Mr. Peden, Steel of Lesmahago, Gray of Chryston (the younger), Holy Peter Patieson, and others. All these with Rysland and the dragoon are now on their march southwestward, having landed on the coast near to Dunbar, as I have this morning received informations. Believing that this may be of immediate value to you to know, I send it by special messenger, trusting that you will not forget to aid with your good word and support the advancement which I so greatly desire from my Lords of the Council, and so I subscribe myself, your Honour's very humble obedient servt. B. E."

"The cursed two-faced fox," said Roddie. "See, Sir Robert, he never names his father and brother as having escaped also from the Bass. But he will not let a single tear trickle when we catch them through his informations, and set them up against a wall with the black mouths o' a dozen muskets glowerin' at them. I only wish he was in the middle o' the raw! I am acquaint wi' yae lad that wad weeze a bullet through the wratch wi pleasure!"

"Aweel, aweel," said Lag, who in his privacies with Roddie dropped familiarly into the vernacular, "let the ill-thriven pout alane. It's the auld birds we want to get our fingers upon. When can I mount and ride, Roddie, that's the question?"

"A sawbones' or a soldier's opinion?" asked Roddie, eyeing his master quaintly.

"Hang you, I want *your* opinion—how often must I say that over, you deaf auld bald-pated tying-post?"

"Well," returned Roddie, as imperturbably as if he had not heard his master speak, "then I think that there's no great harm done! It was a clean lunge, weel-judged——"

"Hang the judgment of it!" said Lag.

"Weel-judged and straight as an arrow! But, ye ken, there wasna the wecht o' a man ahint it. It will be a twa-three days afore ye can raise your airm abune your heid, Sir Robert, but I see nocht to hinder ye to mount and ride the morn gin ye like. Ye will mak' some gye dour faces when the beast jirgs ye ower the stanes, but what matters that? Ye will leeve and loup dykes for a' that. And whatna a haul—Peden the Prophet and the Ellisons, forbye the twa bauld traitors of His Majesty, Grif Rysland and Raith the Dragooner, the Cornet Grahame was so proud o' as a recruit! I'll wager that we will net mair nor eneuch to win yon lass's favour wi', gin it like ye. We will mak' her a better offer than that young fule Steevie up the stairs, wi' his pardons and his respects and his kissing o' hands! Guid help us, that auld Scotland should hae come to this! There wad hae been nane o' that beckin' and bowin', had oor lads comed across a bonny lass in the year o' the Hielant Host!"

Lag looked grim enough as he shook his head.

"Na, na," he said, "I sue for nae proud madam's favours, nor will I buy the least o' them with her father's life. A firing party at six yards' distance and an officer to gie the signal wi' his sword—that's Robert Grier's notion, for the hale rebel hive! Then let My Lord's Nonesuch of a Girl console herself on the bosom of my Lady Countess of Liddesdale, an she will. There's routh o' room there, I'll wager! But we must to the work before Liddesdale gets wind of us. Off with you to-night and raise Lag's riders. Wherever they are scattered, send and warn them—from Carsphairn, from Sanquhar Peel, from Rockhall and the borders of Irongray. Be back in two days, and by that time, thanks to Steevie Houston's fostering care, I shall be ready to ride out at their head. But bring them to the road-end at night, and, above all, let not a whisper reach My Lord's ears. He will be fixed for ten days at Kingsberry with his new toy. They will sing duets together, and the Countess will accompany them on the mandolin—paugh!"

And he chanted in contempt:

"Here at thy feet we tribute pay
Of all the glories of the May!"

Roddie and his master laughed together.

"Ah," said Lag, with a fierce grin, "you and I will have something to lay at the feet of beauty which will surprise her, ah Roddie?"

"Aye," quoth Roddie, "her father's head! I saw Mr. Cameron's cut off on the day of Ayr's Moss! Earlshall gave a lad about my size a guinea for doing it!"

CHAPTER FORTY

KINGSBERRY-ON-THE-HILL

LATE as was the hour the many-windowed front of Kingsberry blazed with light. It was in situation, in plan, and in surroundings a perfect contrast to Houston-in-the-Hollow. It might fitly have been named "Kingsberry-on-the-Hill." It was of an altogether newer time, having been commenced immediately before the Civil Wars, and finished immediately after them. More English than Scottish, with a front all windowed, standing on a *piano nobile*, with wide stone staircases, numberless turrets, crow-stepped as the sole concession to the national taste, massed and fluted chimneys, and a great hall a hundred and fifty feet long—such were the prominent features of Kingsberry. But as the cavalcade approached that dark night the windows with their numberless lights and the great open hall door aloft on its terrace first took the eye.

Happily, as the Earl had said, it was no long way from Houston to his Castle-palace of Kingsberry. He had sent on a servant before him to order all to be in readiness, and also to warn My Lady.

The Lady Countess of Liddesdale stood at the top of the steps to receive her guests. She was a woman of great height, reputed in the country to be a match for any man at wrestling or fisticuffs. She was counted eccentric, and being a daughter of the late almost royal Duke of Rothesay, she could afford to say and do the most extravagant things without question. It was even reported among the vulgar that the whole relation of husband and wife was on an unusual footing, and that more than once the lady had been known to inflict corporal chastisement upon her erring mate when he stayed out late. But as this was likely to be merely a tale suggested by the relative sizes of husband and wife when seen together, little credence need be given to it. They were always on the most affectionate terms in public, and what more need any one require?

"This," said the Earl, introducing Marjory Simpson, "is the wife of the Laird of Mayfield in Galloway——"

"And none the worse that the goodman wears a bonnet," said the Lady of Liddesdale, "forbye he is a Whig! For which I think all the better o' him, and of you also. Whiles I am something o' a Whig mysel but I am terrible troubled with the auld Adam. Ye have heard of my father, and his father before him, auld Duke Rothesay. It's terrible hard to keep the flesh in order wi' forbears like them! And this will be your daughter, what's her name?—Euphrain—preserve us, what a name! It's like the folk that David used to sing the Psalms to, Selah and Shiggaion and siclike!"

"And this," said her husband, presenting his chief guest in a lull, "Mistress Ivie Rysland, the daughter of Captain Grif Rysland, late Governor of the Bass."

The Lady of Liddesdale took Ivie by both shoulders, drew her under a great branched candlestick and looked at her carefully and long.

"Sic a din as there has been about ye, lassie," she said, "a' the men-folk clean daft. And him—my faith, he couldna bide to tae his chack of dinner in peace but maun mount and ride to fetch ye here, as soon as he kenned that I was at the castle."

"Hush, Meg——" began her husband, putting out his hand to stop her.

"Deed, I'll 'hush Meg' nane," said the lady, "it's true I'm tellin, and an unco blessing! For had I no been here, there would hae been sparks driven from steel ower the head o' ye, lass!"

"There were—there were," cried her husband, eagerly snapping his fingers; "wait till I get ye upstairs, Meg, and I'll tell ye a tale that will keep ye from sleeping for a week!"

"Sleeping," echoed his wife, "I am sure that thae puir things need sleep—aye, and sleep they shall hae. Bid the loons oot-bye be off with their tar-barrels. Guid-e'en to ye, gentlemen. I'll be seein mair o' you Houstons, I'm thinkin', than I hae seen at the Castle o' Kingsberry this mony a year. Tam, the thief, is in his restin' grave, Guid rest his saul! I'se warrant he needs a prayer, and though I'm a kind o' Whig mysel', he willna be the waur o' mine! But, my faith, Kingsberry will be like a honey-pot in haytime while ye bide, my lass. The morn's mornin' ye will tell me all about your kith and kin. Ye maun be foreign, by the look o' ye! Ye are overly bonny for any o' the auld Scots houses. It's a queer thing, but after three generations we breed men that are but wisps o' tow and the women like dairymaids!"

It was in this fashion that the three poor wearied, harried women from the cot of Prayerful Peter at last found a lodging and a bed apiece, sweeter to them than down, under the roof of a daughter of a duke, and under the protection of the first officer of State in Scotland.

Next morning the Countess, no respecter of persons, insisted on having Marjory and Euphrain with her to prayers in her own chamber. But she would not on any pretext allow Ivie to be called.

"No, no," she said, "let the lass sleep. She can tak' her religion a wee later, wi' her breakfast baps! But bid Mr. Eastwood to come his ways ben to my private chaumer, and warn the Earl to keep oot o' the road!"

She took Marjory's arm in a friendly manner as she conducted her into her own room.

"We have good Presbyterian prayers every morning," she said in a lowered voice. "Honest Mr. Eastwood, him that was outed in the year Sixty—he was our parish minister, and used to rebuke my faither Rothesay (caa'ed the Young Deil) soundly for his ongauns after the King came back and a' his foreign sculduddery wi' him, Rothesay amang the rest! And though there has been a word or twa aboot the Oaths, and takkin' the Test and siclike, guid Maister Eastwood has bidden quiet here in Kingsberry, and never been meddled. The Secretary pretends never to see him when they meet in the library. Or if there are ither folk there he cries, 'Librarian, seek me the Manuscript volume o' my Lord the Earl o' Rochester—his ballants.' And then Mr. Eastwood answers briskly, 'Indeed, My Lord, that will I not, and black shame should sit on your brow to ask for sic a thing!' All which passes well enough. For then the guidman can e'en shrug his shoulders and say ahint his hand, 'He is an original that my wife Meg likes to keep about her! She is Rothesay's daughter, ye ken!'"

In the midst of these confidences Mr. Eastwood himself, a sedate, white-haired old man of about sixty, having entered, proceeded to perform family worship with much reverence and true devotion, so that even critical Euphrain owned to having been edified.

As soon as the good man had finished My Lady said to him, "And now, Mr. Eastwood, here is a pleasant task. Will you conduct these ladies, who are of our persuasion, and see that they get their breakfast. The Secretary will take his alone. And as for me—if I put off any longer going up to see the lass that stickit my Lord's rapier through the shoulder of Roarin' Rob Grier, I declare I shall perish for the want o't, like a young wife graning for sowens!"

* * * * * *

"Weel," said the bold Countess, when she had heard Ivie's story, "ye had need to be baith a bonny and a clever lass—your lad is sure to be hanged, your faither like to be, and yoursel' wi' wild Rob Grier on your track and half the drucken tear-the-winds in the country. But cannily and kindly, lass, and you and me—we'll wear the kye intil the byre yet! The lambs are no a' deid because the tod is on the hill!"

Ivie, held perforce to her bed by the commands of the Countess, sipped delicately at the tea which the great lady prepared with her own hands as if she had been accustomed to it all her life, without the least idea that it cost six guineas a pound.

"Certes, lass," said the Countess as she watched her, "ye might do waur than settle ower by with yon lad Steevie Houston. Ye could wind him about your finger. What garred ye fancy the dragoon at ten shillings Scots a day? But wherefore blush? Gin a maid's fancy be not free, she had better be a slave among the infidel Turks! But frankly, the thing passes me, lass."

"Well," said Ivie, now at her ease, "it just happened. I began by mocking and lightlying him, and then he answered well and featly and modestly, so in the end I could not but listen. Then I liked to hear him. After that, he left all and was cursed by his father (not by his mother), because of following me."

"Well might he do that," cried the Lady Liddesdale, "were I a man, I declare I would have done the same—father, mother and all!"

"Then on the Bass, we were much together, and the days were long and blue. And somehow he grew to be different from all the world, and when I was blown over the rock, he threw himself after me into the sea, and was most heart-broke when he found me not. Then again after that we found one another, and for a little—it seemed as if I could come to love him if—I had time!"

"Then," said My Lady quickly, "you have not yet told him?"

"No-o," said Ivie, slowly, "but—I have a guess that he knows!"

"Not he," cried the Countess, "I'll wager he is of your modest breed that I never could abide! Conceit and youth should go together in a young man. You say he is handsome!"

Ivie nodded, the faintest smile of malice about her lips.

"Not so handsome as my father—that of course. But handsome—yes!"

"After what fashion?" demanded Lady Liddesdale.

"Tall—ruddy of cheek, hair which curls, and shoulders broad," said Ivie. "The soldier's coat suits him well enough! But it was not for that I loved him!"

"For what then, girl?"

"Why, you see, with other men all was easy." Ivie paused to think. "They followed, like sparrows when one flings crumbs in the snow. But he was shy—like a deer looking at you out of the wood. Yet bold enough with men, and a good fighter, which is his trade, but with me shy as a maid in short-kirtles. It became a delight to me only to walk by his side and hear him stammer—that is, till suddenly he found his tongue. And because he has a white skin—one could see a little pulse in his neck fluttering away by itself, and by that you know how fast his heart beat."

"No one ever did that for me," sighed the Countess, "yet I like to hear it. 'Tis an exercise I love more than Mr. Eastwood's."

"Who is Mr. Eastwood?" said Ivie.

"All in good time,—Mr. Eastwood can wait," cried My Lady. "And so he found his tongue? Tell me of that!"

Just then there came a knock upon the door without, and a low voice asked if My Lady Countess and the young lady Mistress Ivie Rysland were yet ready to receive My Lord!

"No," cried the Countess, "nor will be for hours. Go away, James, to your papers. Have I lived so long in the same house and not know your voice, oil it as you will? Go and do the King's business—Mistress Ivie and I have ours. Or go shoot us some ducks on the moor pond. Break your own laws in the matter of muir-fowl, heath-fowl, ducks, drakes, ptarmigan and quail, but do not venture up this stairway again, or by the word of Margaret of Rothesay, your lawful wife, ye will get the water-pitcher broken over your head—a pretty jest to be told of a Secretary of State and a Lord Lieutenant of the Kingdom!"

The footsteps retreated down the stair, and her Ladyship laughed.

"Just now James is so eaten up with jealousy it is a pleasure to think on," she said. "He will die one of these days merely of wanting to know. That is really why he troubles with all this business of the State, which puts nothing in his pocket. He must needs have his finger in every pie, and a handful out of every poke. Not of money, but of gossip—something to tell me. I keep him firm at that, and, Lord love you, lass, I have found it tie him faster and firmer than beauty. There is none to whom he can speak as he can to me. For Meg of Rothesay, though she be muckle of mou' like her namesake, can keep that muckle mouth all the firmer shut when she likes! But now that we have sent James off with a flea in his lug, tell me how that lad of yours found his tongue!"

"Why," said Ivie, lying back on the pillow and resting her head between her hands, "indeed I hardly remember. It is so long ago. It began, I think, about my eyes—his were blue, I remember!"

"Ah, you remember that, do you?" said the Countess. "I begin to think that there was nothing so very wonderful about it, after all!"

"And my lips—he said," Ivie stammered, "but it is folly. I cannot repeat it!"

"Go on," cried the Countess, "it is good even to be made love to at second hand. More shame to an old woman who should be at her prayers!"

"He said that my lips were not cherry-red like those of country girls, but like the little flakes of pink which one sees above the gold of the dawn!"

"I never saw it, except when we were coming home from the King's water parties at Hampton, and then I was too sleepy, or else had to lecture James about his conduct with the maids of honour. Still it is marvellous—from a country lad. But you must have taught him?"

Ivie smiled upon the pillows, lazily reminiscent.

"Perhaps," she said, "but it is in him to begin with. The others—why, mostly, one has to awake their vocabulary with a horsewhip——"

"As you did for Roaring Rob over at Houston last night—well—that is not all, I see it in your smile."

"I had some broom in my hair one day," Ivie proceeded, with the same curious, far-away smile, "I thought it would become me and tease him—it was foolish—but then it was so long ago. I was *much* younger then."

"By how many months?" said her Ladyship of Liddesdale.

"And—one does not think—I threw him a little chaplet of it. It fell in the dust at his feet!"

"Stop, don't tell me," cried the Lady Liddesdale, "I know what he did with it."

"Yes, was it not foolish of him?—for of course broom-flourish falls off so easily. You cannot carry it that way!"

"Ah," sighed Margaret of Rothesay, daughter of a ducal house, "doubtless it *was* foolish of him. But then he was young. And alas, he will grow wiser. But I am not sure that you will like it better when he does. My dear, it is only ugly women who remain young and foolish all their lives!"

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

THE HAUNTED HAGS OF CRAIG WEARY

Now it chanced that at the very moment appointed for the departure of the four riders from the heights of Barnton Heuch, above the Cove of Cantie Bay, there appeared one on the scene who has hitherto kept wilfully in the background of this history—though his commercial schemes and appliances for the use of the distressed have more than once been found of value.

This was no other than Prayerful Peter. But it was a very different Peter from the retiring and respectful person whom Grif and Raith had seen at the Bass, or upon rare visits to the mainland. Wild of aspect, piteous and quivering of mouth, he laid so violent a hold upon Grif Rysland, that the hand of that quick-tempered soldier twitched to administer a buffet.

"What is it?" he demanded; "do you not see, man—we are already mounted for a journey?"

"No journey do ye gang, no one o' ye, till ye hae satisfied my just and lawful claims!" cried Prayerful Peter. "The besoms that I treated like queens—yea, like the daughters o' kings (you yoursel' being witness, Mr. Grif Rysland), hae left me mourning like the afflicted dove. They hae gane withoot paying board and lodgin'—four calendar months and near on to five since I saw the colour of their siller! And the guid sawmont, and the grilse, the sea-fish and the flat-fish, herrin' fresh frae Sant Anders Bay, and saithe off the rocks o' the Black Point—a' fished by my ain boats, drawn up on lines and in nets at the peril o' my nephew's life, mysel' howking in the sand for bait till I shivered wi' fear and cauld! And then fit to dreep wi' sweat when thae unhallowed deils o' soldiers fired sma' shot at puir Peter to gar him rin! And for a' that never a penny! I hae comed to you for payment, Maister Captain Rysland, and payment I maun hae. Forbye a' the boat service to settle, and the danger to my kith and kin—no to mention what this young man eat up yonder in the Cove! But this is the wee bit note here. Ye will juist be payin' it a'thegither, the noo!"

"Hold your tongue, man," shouted Grif, losing all patience; "do you not understand that the ladies——"

"Leddies!" began Peter with a snort.

Grif drew one pistol from his holster. Raith took one from his, and each applied the muzzle to the nearest ear of the distressed creditor.

"Yes, ladies," quoth Grif; "one of them is my daughter!"

"Yes, ladies," said Raith; "of the other two, one is my mother, and the other my sister!"

"Ladies, then sure-*ly*," shrieked Peter in an agony; "put down your weepons, gentlemen! But what am I to do for my guid siller? I am a puir ruinated man—my hoose driven a' to flinders—boots Guid kens whaur—my lodgers some gane, and the rest mounted to ride. Deil tak' me, if I do not arrest thae horses in the name o' the law!"

"The horses are our father's," remarked Archie Simpson. "Do you want us to draw our pistols also?"

"Do not be a fool, Peter," said Raith, who was the coolest of the party. "Can you not understand that the ladies have been carried off against their wills? We are going to find them. If you like, you can come with us and so make sure of your money!"

"He must provide himself with a horse then," cried the elder of the Simpsons. "Our father can spare no more from the farm work."

"Come," cried Peter, "that will I speedily, if so be that at the journey's end ye promise me satisfaction for my outlays and troubles of mind endured both by me and my nephew!"

Prayerful Peter was as good as his word. He had a pony hidden away somewhere in some secret cove or ravine, for in ten minutes he had overtaken them, riding none so ill for a man of his years and weight.

"Now," said Grif, who was still feeling his injuries, in spite of the easy-riding qualities of Mistress Simpson's Sabbath Peat-barrow, "hearken to me, Master Peter. For the sake of lucre you have forced yourself upon us——"

"To recover my just dues!" said Peter, "also to further the Cause of the Oppressed!"

"Now, sir," continued Grif Rysland, sternly, "you must do as you are bidden—ride and halt with the others, keep your tongue still, and fret us with no complaints. That is, if you do not want to be left at a dykeback with the corbies pyking at your banes! Mind, I have not forgotten my old trade, Peter!"

Of course Grif said this to intimidate their companion. For they all judged it better to take him with them on such terms, than to leave Prayerful Peter to run the country, pouring the tale of his losses into every ear.

On the journey it came to be a matter of course that Peter, who was acquainted with every inch of the ground and who from his experience in evading the authorities could keep well off the highways of traffic, was allowed to go on ahead, pointing out the ground along which the party was to pass and in general acting as advance guard.

It seemed sometimes to Raith as if Peter took rather too much upon himself, and as if upon more than one occasion he intentionally delayed them under pretext of a dangerous passage or a troop of horsemen crossing the valley on their way to the nearest garrison town.

He had spoken of this to Grif, but he, preoccupied with the pain of his burns and the increasing difficulties of each march, answered merely that Peter knew him too well to play any tricks.

Nevertheless Peter was playing tricks, though the present trick was an innocent one. They were at length well out on that great heathery plateau which stretches from the Lammermoors and Moorfoots south to the Solway. Many a moss had they to ride around, yet ever they returned to their appointed route, bearing south-west—the direction of the party which had carried off Ivie and her companions.

A black peaty ridge, in reality elevated from the plain only a few feet, but seeming mountainous in that weary level of bent and heather, rose directly before them, and at sight of it Peter's agitation grew almost painful. Raith pointed out to him what seemed a drier route.

"No—no," he answered, his teeth chattering with anxiety, "the Hags o' Craig Weary—the Haunted Hags o' Craig Weary are a kenned place. Mony is the prayer that has been put up there. If there be Wanderers of the persecuted and scattered remnant onywhere on these wild uplands, they will surely be found at the Hags o' Craig Weary."

Raith glanced at his informant's face. There was something in it he did not trust, but it was evident to him that Grif could not go much further without rest, and really the place was as safe as any—a deep hollow scooped in the face of the moor, with dry eyots and peninsulas and heather amid the green scum of the morasses.

All at once Archie Simpson held up his hand, and the whole cavalcade stopped as one man. The spirit of caution infected even the horses in these days. Clear on the thin chill breeze of even there came to their ears the plaintive rise and fall of a psalm.

"The Folk!" cried Peter, with something like a sincere joy, "they are there! We shall see—perhaps we will get word—*of the boats!*"

"You rascal!" said Grif, "I believe you have brought us here on purpose."

"And you will live to thank me all your days, Captain Grif," said the unabashed Peter, "you could have come to no better place. Wait—I will go forward and see."

"No," commanded Grif, "do nothing of the sort. I would not trust you alone the length of twenty ells. Go with him, Raith. The rest will wait you here. But first lay me out on the heather, and let Archie there, attend to me."

"Could not Archie go as well as I?" Raith asked the question in a low voice. He hated to let another do a hand's turn for Ivie's father. Nevertheless he went, slowly and on foot. It was a singular sight which met his eyes at the edge of the moss.

Deep in the bosom of a cup of peat from which most of the moisture had sucked away, Raith saw a little company of men upon their knees. The psalm had been sung and now one, erect among the others, prayed. He could hardly believe his eyes. It was Mr. Peden himself. William Ellison knelt beside him, with a hand on Gil's shoulder. Under his feet were the full muster of the prisoners from the Bass. And yonder on a little hillock, keeping his watch, with a gun at his shoulder held clumsily like an oar, Raith spied out Long-bodied John. He was making a friendly signal to his uncle, and the gesture left no doubt in Raith's mind that the rendezvous had been prearranged.

"Wheesht till he is done!" whispered Peter in Raith's ear, "or else he will maybe curse us. Sandy Peden is no a man to be crossin' when the Spirit o' the Lord is upon him!"

And they could hear the voice of the Prophet, more in rhapsody than in prayer.

"Be ye still and listen!—For though we draw the sword, and there is blood yet to be shed, yet not by the sword shall safety come to this poor land! Woe to them that are at ease in Zion! If ye draw the sword ye shall perish by the sword. Yet though we flee before our cruel enemies and though the blood of God's chosen runs like water on these moors and mountains, yet that is better than the blast of snell east-withering wind that (ere I be long in my grave at the gallows-foot) shall blow upon this land. Woe is me for the fine gold that is grown dim and the most fine gold that is changed—for the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, that shall be esteemed as earthen vessels."

"But," he continued, turning his closed eyes to where Raith and Peter Paton were hidden behind their peat-rig, "I see some that have been wandering, prodigals in a far land, and are now being brought nigh. For so much, give glory to God. Yet among them there is one who thinks only of carrying the bag, and careth not for the poor—yet because every man may find what he seeks for, he too shall not go without his reward."

"He means," whispered Peter, jubilantly, "that the boats are safe and that I shall get my siller. I wish he had mentioned aboot the paint, and if the sails were onway sair tashed!"

Mr. Peden ended without amen or benediction, which also was his custom. For he affirmed that those who won to heaven would have all eternity for a benediction, while those who did not, would be none the better of all the benedictions that were ever said or sung. In which, certainly, there was some reason and truth.

"And now," said Peden, suddenly resuming his natural voice, "come your ways forward, lads. I bid you welcome. William Ellison, this is your son, your true son Raith, to whom more than any other you owe your deliverance from prison, and to whom in the days to come ye shall owe yet more. Lay your hand on the lad's head, and take your hasty curse back again, lest it blight you in That Day—the day when at the sound of a trumpet ye shall stand before the White Throne."

And as Raith came rather uncertainly forward, Mr. Peden ran to him with an alertness extraordinary in so frail a man, and one so worn by years and trials. He took the young man by the hand, and put it in that of his father, who was now standing up in his place, his face pale, and his lips trembling.

"Is it even so?" he said, "are you my very son—my youngest son Raith, and has the Spirit of the Lord worked in you also?" He put his hand out to feel Raith's dress.

"No soldier's coat—no more the garb of Satan? And he girt his fisher's coat to him, for he was naked!" he murmured as if to himself.

Gil grasped his brother's hand silently, and would have compelled him to sit down. But in a few words Raith told of the quest he had come upon, and how Captain Grif had been hurt in saving the soldier out of the burning gate-house upon the Bass.

And when William Ellison frosted a little at the name of the ancient governor of the King's prison, Mr Peden said quickly, "He is indeed yet a man of desires. But fear not, for him also the angels of God stand waiting!"

So, leaving Prayerful Peter to talk apart with his nephew, Raith strode back over the heather, and soon Grif and the young Simpson lads were among the prisoners whom they had aided to escape. It was a strange meeting there in the black heart of the morasses, and yet even here, they were by no means safe. For it was the hottest time of the persecution and parties of military were continually on the move from post to post.

It was a quiet evening showing only a sober russet flush before the long grey gloaming of the moors. William Ellison sat, strangely sweetened and changed, his son's hand in his.

"I have never been against you in my heart, son Raith," he said. "God kept me from that great sin. And though I laid the ban upon you, it was done in haste and without hatred."

"Yet for that shall you be punished, William," said Mr. Peden, "and though the punishment shall not come through one son it shall through another. But neither in the day of shame curse him, lest he cry to the Lord against you. For," said he, looking up to heaven, "I would rather be compassed about with armies of armed men—yea, with drawn swords and instruments of death, than have mine own curse, which my proper lips have uttered, return back upon my head."

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

AN HIGH HILL AS THE HILL OF BASHAN

Many were the remarkable sayings uttered by Mr. Peden among the Hags of Craig Weary. Indeed some of them have since been imprinted as prophecies, which they never were, or at least not so in any direct sense. The fate of the earnest seeker after God, even though circled with perils and fainting under his cross, contrasted with the lot of the evil and bloody man who should not live out half his days—formed the chiefest part of his meditations.

Yet sometimes he had visions, and then he would speak strange things, which seemed to come to him from above. Speaking, for instance, of the care which weighed on the hearts of Grif and the Ellisons, and yet more heavily on the young heart of Raith, he had these remarkable expressions: "No harm hath yet befallen them—I see them in a grey-towered house amid high cliffs and trees. The ungodly are there in great number, but there is one also who draws a sharp sword, and with it strikes a great enemy of the truth. Yet the Lord shall move even the hearts of the great ones of the land to protect the helpless. Nevertheless even so, of peril there is no lack for all of us—both with them and also in this place. Let us go to the Hill which is called Aron."

And as soon as Grif was a little recovered from his weariness, the thing was done. For not only were there parties of the troopers observed crossing some part of the waste and beating it as if for a quarry, but there was another reason, still more imperative—their need of food. For though there were nigh a dozen to be provided for, save the moor-berries, scanty fare at best and ill to stomach, there was naught to be found on all the great waste of Craig Weary.

True, so far as the regular soldiers were concerned, they were mostly either very far to the north crossing towards Straiven or very far to the south on their way to Crichton Peel.

But Mr. Peden hasted their departure, saying, "There cometh one to seek for us that will soon smell us out. He comes after us hot of foot, and with intent to kill. He will seek till he find, and empty the muir of Craig Weary as a man empties an egg with a spoon!"

Now the hill of Ben Aron, of which Mr. Peden spoke, was a little rocky mountain, the last northerly outpost of the

Galloway Hills as they break down into the level moor. It had long been counted a safe place. For there was a cave there, and a river ran slow in a close loop about two-thirds of it, whilst the other third was protected by a breast of rock high and defensible as that of a built fortification.

From the Hags of Craig Weary, Ben Aron could be seen on fine days far away to the south-west, a fine crest of jagged blue against the rolling outline of the higher mountains behind. Moreover there was a cultivated well-doing country about, and behind, thousands upon thousands of acres of sheep-tracks, where the shepherds and their masters were to a man favourers of the wanderers, nor grudged a sheep or two for their larder in time of need, knowing well that where the Covenant folk frequented, thieves never came.

It was a painful journey across the brown moorland. It seemed to Grif that never would he set leg across a horse again. But something occurred which hurried them.

As they were crossing the wild in a scattered band, some riding double on horseback, others leading the overweighted steeds or in front pointing out the way, a large body of troopers was observed heading in their direction. At first it appeared that these men were simply crossing towards Sanquhar, and at sight of them Grif ordered all his party to lie down in the nearest crevasse of the peaty moor. But it chanced that Long-bodied John, less accustomed to the charge of a horse than to the demeanour of a boat, let slip the reins of his pony, which instantly went bounding and prancing over the bog, flourishing its heels and flinging back its head in the delight of disobedience and freedom.

Even so, it seemed for a moment as if the band of horsemen would continue its march. But after a vain attempt at recapture had been made, it was evident that the soldiers had halted to consult. Then a detachment of a dozen broke off from the main body and rode straight in the direction of the fugitives.

There could no longer be any doubt that the party was discovered. Grif instantly ordered all who had horses to mount the old and infirm of the party and make as fast as might be for the Hill of Ben Aron. Luckily the distance was not great, but the advancing party had by much the easier route, and at the first sight of the fugitives on the open face of the moor, a shot was fired by the party of reconnaissance, probably as a signal to the main body.

Now there followed a moment of great anxiety. If Grif and his people failed to reach Ben Aron first, and to protect themselves behind the breast-work of rock, they would assuredly be ridden down upon the open plain, which at this point, perhaps because of the drainage of the river, was well adapted for the evolutions of horse.

As they made what haste they could, Grif looked wistfully at the tall, ridgy hill (which in the East country would have been called a Law) with its dark rocks and dense cover of hazel and birch bushes. As the enemy advanced towards them they spread out in a fan.

"Ah," said Grif, "those fellows are commanded by a man who knows his trade. He does that to disturb our aim if we should attempt to return their fire."

And indeed the horsemen did begin to ride up and down, weaving in and out intricately, but no longer advancing quickly.

"Something is holding them—something we do not see!" said Grif, "we shall make it yet!"

Then young Mr. Grey of Chryston, brother to him that was killed at Ayrs Moss with Mr. Cameron, asked permission to say a word.

"Sir," he said to Captain Rysland, "I know this country. That band of horsemen yonder can do us no hurt for the present. They are on the wrong side of the river!"

"Which river, pray?" demanded Grif, who saw none.

"The Aron Water, sir," said Grey; "we call it the Lane of Aron. It is slow and very deep—the bottom black peaty sludge mixed with quicksand—no horses could win through. What, they are for trying it after all!"

And indeed one bold fellow, riding well ahead of his company, set his beast's head to the water and plunged in. But at the very first floundering leap, something seemed to pull the charger under with a jerk. The rider was entangled in his stirrup-irons. The black water leaped up sullen and sprayless, heavy as lead. It seem to engulf both horse and man. They sank from sight in those fatal deeps, and were seen no more—while a loud and angry cry arose from his companions in the ranks behind.

Nevertheless no one dared to venture nearer the water of death, on the still and sullen surface of which floated a draggled hat-plume, the feathers of which had but lately flaunted so cavalierly on the breeze of the uplands.

But presently, as if in revenge, the fusillade crackled. The smoke floated up from the short cavalry carbines. The men, gay in their red coats, rode here and there seeking a place of crossing—but perhaps not too anxious to find it.

Grif watched their evolutions with a fine contempt.

"Militia," he said, "and if I am not mistaken the Laird of Lag's command." Meanwhile the wanderers were hastening on towards the hill of safety.

"Do not hurry," cried Grif, "the bullets cannot reach you. They are but wasting ammunition. No," he added privately to Raith, "do not reply. We will save our powder and ball for more immediate consumption."

The second and larger party of the troopers had now come up with the advance guard, and there was another halt for consultation.

"Lag is finding out his mistake," said Grif, "he will now do what he ought to have done at first—follow the water up till he finds a ford. How far might that be?"

"A matter of three miles for horses of that weight," said Grey of Chryston, with the confidence of knowledge. Grif motioned with his hand towards Ben Aron, and all proceeded to climb the narrow and difficult way which led across bare rocks and by slippery footholds into that rocky fortress.

"It is as well," said Grif, "that the river happened to be where it is, and the enemy on the farther side. Otherwise they could have stood at their ease below and tumbled us off three at a time as we came up these rocks—goat-paths—naught else. I wonder how the horses kept their footing!"

For, saving the pony which had first escaped and so called the attention of the enemy, horse and man were now safe within. That fidgety brute, however, followed along the river, neighing across to the troop horses on the other side.

Grif, having been set down in a nook of heather and bracken, from which he could see spread out before him, as on a map, the whole level floor up which they had come, and down which the enemy would follow them as soon as he had found a ford, began at once to organise his defences. There were five muskets only among the party which had been guided inland by Long-bodied John, including that which he himself carried so awkwardly. Of these two were in the hands of picked and noted marksmen, young Grey of Chryston and Steel of Lesmahago. It was impossible to persuade the third out of the hands of Long-bodied John, even though (as every one imagined) that would prove to be no better than a piece thrown away. Then as a matter of course Gil had one, which he would use quietly, soberly and with effect, as indeed Gil did everything. Grif and his party were of course all well-armed. Raith Ellison was named commander of the actual defence, Grif reserving to himself a place in the centre, from which he could bring to bear a pair of muskets on the difficult path by which they had themselves reached the top of the rocky breast-work.

For indeed the place was a real fortress, isolated and well-nigh impregnable. One may see the same thing in climbing towards Loch Enoch from the valley of Neldrichen. But, in addition, at the Hill of Aron there is plenty of cover for concealed marksmen, the green waving of hazel bushes and hanging sprays of birch, springing out of the niches of the rock.

There were two weak places in the defence, namely, where the breastwork fell away at either side into the loop of the river, where it took a turn about the hill, and, but for the tongue of land by which they had arrived, would have succeeded in making it wholly an island. At both corners, but especially on the western side, there was a place at which a bold fellow might attempt an escalade. Then, once arrived at the top, he might open an oblique fire upon the men lying behind the breastwork. "In fact," said Grif, "if they find their way up there, they will completely enfilade our position!"

"Then I will take that western angle myself, with young Chryston or some other good man as a companion!" said Raith, his spirits, as ever, rising at the thought of danger, and still more that he was to fight under the eyes of Ivie's father. Grif Rysland shook his head. "No," he said, "I cannot do without you; tied here by the leg, or rather wanting the legs, I must have you free to see that every man is doing his duty. To whom, think you, shall we give the place?"

"Grey seems a clever fellow," said Raith, meditating, "but we do not know him well enough yet. What say you to Gil, my brother? He is a good marksman, and if you tell him to do a thing, he will stay and do it, as the saying goes 'till the kye come hame.' Then let Grey have the other corner, and give each a young Simpson—they are brave lads, but lack ballast, while Gil has ballast enough for Captain Teddiman's *Swiftsure*."

"But will not your brother wish to stay by your father?" suggested Grif, pleased by his lieutenant's quick dispositions.

"Let Mr. Peden go with him to the cave," said Raith at once, "it is on the other side. They will be in complete safety, and even Peter Paton can stand a watch there, to see that no tricks are tried on the river-front."

At this moment, and while Raith was gone to carry out Grif's instructions and his own suggestions, Prayerful Peter came up to the Captain, as he lay on his couch of tall brown grass and bracken fronds.

"And it is to this that I hae come?" he began, with a certain truculence, "me that has been a man of peace and never was within ear-shot o' the sounds o' war, longer than the time it took my heels to leave them ahint! Am I, Peter Paton, to be prisoned on this sorrowfu' hill, to be ta'n and judged in the company of kenned rebels and manslayers? And then as like as not, the Grassmarket and the confiscation o' a' my guids and chattels."

"As like as not," said Grif, smiling, "but you should think of the joys of martyrdom. You were discoursing about suffering for the Cause only the other day."

"The joys o' martyrdom," cried Peter, shaking his fist over his head, "man, I couldna even be happy amang the joys o' heeven if I thocht that a' the guid gear I hae won and thocht for, and toiled for, was a' gane bleezin' up like a wisp o' strae on a bonfire. Na, na, harps and wings and siclike wad be but a puir, puir compensation for Peter! Methinks he wad e'en scrape himsel' a hole in the stoor like a drookit chuckie-hen, and sit there thinkin' on his braw hoose and his twa bonny boats, and a' the brand-new nets and gear. And, to tell ye the truth, Captain Grif, do ye think that even the noo—could I no hae onything on account? If it were only twenty pound, it wad be a kind o' consolation to me to die wi' it in my breast-pocket, and ken that I wasna a'thegether cheated o' my just dues!"

"Out of this, friend Peter," cried Grif who had had enough of the mariner, "is this a time to be dunning us for money? Where are we to get gold and silver, think you, in this waste? Bullets are like to be more plentiful!"

"But a wee scribe o' your hand, oh, Captain," pleaded his creditor, "just sayin' that the amount was due on your estate—save us, that wad aye be something to a puir dyin' man!"

"Raith," called out Captain Grif, "take that man up to the cave, and bid Mr. Peden pray for him. He is beyond me, standing yammering there for his abominable money, when we are all like to be shot ere the gloaming!"

"Oh, sir, sir," cried out Prayerful Peter, "I beseech ye to no mak' a bad worse! Dinna tell the Prophet, or he would wither me wi' a look. 'Thy siller perish with thee!' he said to me only the ither day. Terrible words—sir, I hae never had them oot o' my head a minute since. To think that a' the gear in the world, and in especial a' that puir Peter Panton has gotten together wi' siccan pains, should a' gang fleein' up in fiery flame at the world's end! It gars me wauken up in the nicht season, sir, a' in a dawn o' fear and drookit wi' sweat—as if I had loupit frae Hughie's Rock into the Frith itsel'!"

"Take him away," cried Grif, "and never let me see his face again. If you can contrive something to keep him quiet on the other side, I shall be grateful. Warn him that if he wishes to keep a whole skin, he must not come within pistol-shot of Grif Rysland till he is sent for—or, by Tubal Cain, I shall mark him! He shall have at least an instalment of his claim—an ounce of lead on account!"

* * * * * *

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

THE WILES OF PRAYERFUL PETER

It was indeed Lag, who with the instinct of the bloodhound, aided by the very exact informations of Beattie Ellison, had succeeded in crossing the track of the fugitives. Very nearly had he missed his mark. The breaking loose of a restive pony from the unaccustomed hands of Long-bodied John had brought pursuer and pursued face to face.

"Say rather," cried Mr. Peden, when Prayerful Peter groaned over the accident as they sat together in the cave, "say rather the mysterious providences of that God, who hath suffered these Stewarts to be such evil Stewards of His Kingdom of Scotland these twenty year and more—though He could at any moment have cut them off in their Babylonian pride. But behold, even for them the writing on the wall is written!"

"An awesome man," thought Peter; "he will be on my back next. I will e'en make my ways outside and there find quiet in meditation."

And so he did, sitting on a stone high above the broad oval sweep of the Aron water, which lapped the foot of the precipices. The higher mountains rose above him too far off even for the besiegers' cannon to have had any effect on the natural fortress of Ben Aron.

Then after looking carefully about him to observe that no one was near, Peter drew a small closely written account-book out of an inner pocket. It was ruled throughout with columns for figures, while curious hieroglyphics—X's and O's of different sizes and designs—explained to Peter himself the state of his finances.

He summed and sighed, and sighed and summed. At intervals he shook his head.

"If I could hae made it the neat five thousand sterling, I declare I wad e'en hae died happy!" he said, "but we maun a' summit to His wull! And yet" (with a brighter look) "in a manner of speaking it *is* my ain. For wi' the Captain's indebtedness for his lass, and the grassum for John's saving her life—(which should be fifty pound at the least—forty-nine to me and ane to John—it is aye befitting to be generous!)—and considerin' my trouble and expense wi' thae rich Ellison folk, and the boats and a'—I think we micht safely and decently make it a hundred and fifty—in a mainner mine already!"

He had added the figures slowly. "And that wad make juist five thousand gowden guineas. It's an awesome sum to hing on the frail thread o' ae man's life! It's a strange thing in Providence when ye come to think on't. By richts a man should hae twa lives—one to make his siller, and the ither to enjoy it."

He turned the leaves rapidly—accounts and items. All were interesting to him. His eye caught an entry in his own peculiar secret writing. He spelled it out. "'Beef, hams and kippered herring for the Hill Folks—twa hundred pound (Scots)'—Ah if that had only been pounds sterling—what a coamfort! But what's this? 'Send by powny-back to the cave on the Hill of Aron!' Faith now, that's the very place we are sittin' on the noo. And here is the note o' the twa pownies back-comin' and the chairge—sixteen pounds (Scots) for ilka ane!

"Noo," said Prayerful Peter, scratching his head, "what say ye if I could find a' this guid meat and vivers? They are, in a manner o' speakin', my very ain. I micht e'en sell them a' ower again! The folk that bought them are near a' deid! But, let me think, there's that young Grey o' Chryston—his faither was cautioner for the proveesioning o' the cave. Na, Peter, that winna do. He micht tell the tale, and that wild ettercap o' a Grif Rysland wad think nae mair o' thrawing my neck, than if I was ane o' thae rabbits there on the hill-face—for a' that I hae dune for him and his!"

Peter looked about him slowly and cunningly. He must find the provisions first, and then he could stay awake as long as need be that night, planning what advantage he might obtain from discovering the treasure-trove to the others.

"They could never be in the muckle cave there," he meditated, "where Mr. Peden is keeping up such a din of praying. No—they would rather be in some wee covert, easy to get at, and most likely on the side nearest the face of rock."

So arguing he went cautiously about the hill, till he could look over, and then he started back with a cry. For advancing up the narrow tongue of land came a hundred horsemen, all in red coats, and nobly arrayed, keeping line and order, drums beating in Whitehall fashion on the saddle-bow, and all as gallant as an ordered show, with banner advanced, and plumes and pennons fluttering.

In front rode a tall man on a great roan horse. Pride was in his port, but one arm (and that the right) was in a sling. That was where Ivie's thrust had taken him. Perhaps because of the too early journey it promised to irk him longer than Roddie had foretold.

Behind the rocks Peter could see the defenders lying each man at his post, his gun at his shoulder, his powder-flask and accoutrements at hand. But only the head of Captain Grif was to be seen above the barricade with which nature had defended the Hill of Aron. He saw too Raith hurrying to and fro with orders and suggestions. Peter desired much to turn and flee, but something chained him to the spot.

"It's bound to be aboot here," he murmured, "they wad come up through the hazels yonder, and aboot the hassock o' rocks, and faith—if that is no the mouth o't!"

He put his weight to an upright stone, rolled it over, carefully detached a tangle of ivy which clung to the cliff, and found himself in the entrance hall of a little cavern. Looking in, Peter saw the tiny barrels, in which at that time kippered herring were packed for transport upon pony-back, lining the sides, while from a great barrel at the corner brine was manifestly oozing—salted beef to a certainty, for there was a frosting of salt crystals about the edge of the lid, and from the roof various smoked hams depended. It was the *cache* of Craig Aron.

"Here's proveesion for an army," said Peter to himself. "I'll e'en hae a chack noo while I am thinkin' things over. They wad never hae fand this trove but for me—nor me but for this bonny wee book, blessings on its yellow back! But losh, what's that—they are begun the shootin'! Dear me, it's an awesome thing to be trapped like this, and me a man o' condition, and worth near on to five thousand yellow Chairlies. Chairles Stuart may have been an ill king on the throne, but, *certes*, Peter Paton has nae faut to find wi' his lang nose on a braw clinkin' guinea!"

He peeped out, but the smoke of battle blew sulphureously up in his face and a chance bullet ricochetting among the rocks, caused him to draw in his head in a hurry.

"Sirce, me!" he cried, "and if there's no Lang-bodied John—that's as guid as a hunder pund a year to me, riskin' his life—that is, in a manner o' speakin', *my* life, amang a' the fleein' bullets and the deadly swords! Noo, I'm wonderin' if I couldna mak' a chairge for that! It would only be just and richt!"

He drew out his vellum-covered volume again to make a suitable entry, but the sharp cries of command, the persistent crackle of musketry, the sight of the gapped ranks of the soldiers, and more particularly a nearer view of Raith and James Simpson carefully carrying something to the rear, fascinated his attention on the scene beneath.

"Save us—save us," he cried, "but if this be what 'Sufferin' for the Cause' is like in the south, I for one wish that I had never put my neb out o' sight o' Berwick Law. There are guid folk eneuch thereaboot, but they let the sodgers gang decently by, and dinna lie ahint rocks blaffin' at them wi' guns and pistolets!"

Angry as Lag was, and eagerly as he anticipated the important capture which he seemed now about to make, he could not but see the folly of losing more men in a frontal attack by cavalry upon a strongly held and naturally defensible position, which could only be carried by a well-led attack on foot.

So after several final discharges he drew off, carrying his wounded, to the number of seven or eight, with him. Some dead remained on the field—perhaps five in all. So that in this skirmish Lag had lost the services of no less than fifteen of his hundred men, besides many horses which had galloped wounded from the field or now limped painfully after their wounded masters.

"It is over for the night," said Peter. "Oh, if I could only soom (swim)—to think on a seafaring man never having learned to soom! What could my faither hae been thinkin' on? But he was aye a worldling, concerned only for his ain gear an gettin'—and after a' deil a penny o't did he leave to me! But though I could soom, the quicksands wad pu' ye under like that dragooner and his horse—and a' my accounts and papers in this buik. Na, hanged or no hanged, Peter! ye maun juist bide and see it oot. Maybe ye can persuade the captain o' the King's troops that ye were a prisoner, and hadden by the Whigs again your will. It wad be worth tryin', onyway. Let me see—I used to ken some fine braid oaths when I was a laddie, afore I experienced a change! That wad please him, if onything—especially if, as I think, it is Roarin' Rab Grier o' the Lag!"

But at that moment Peter heard the voice of Grey of Chryston, who, released from his post, was mounting the hill along with Raith. They, too, were in search of something.

"It should be somewhere here," said young Grey, "my father was at the hidin' of the provend—and he always told me it was on the side looking on to the plain, averse from the river and not in the main cave——"

At the sound of their discourse Prayerful Peter issued out, the light of self-sacrifice on his face.

"Gentlemen," he cried, "as I told you, I am no gleg hand at the fighting with gun and musket, with sword or baggonet. So this day I have wrestled, not with carnal weapons, but in fervent supplication—so that there has been revealed unto me this precious store of vivers, food for the body for many days—all which, though I might have keeped for mysel', I freely deliver to you for the Good of the Cause, hoping only to be rewarded hereafter, and seeking no reward on this earth!"

"No," said young Grey, smartly, "indeed I should think not, seeing that my father paid you two prices already for every pennyworth of it!"

Prayerful Peter flung up his hands and his eyes with one action.

"I am one of the meek of the earth," he said, "what I have done, I have done. I have found the provender, when none else could, and neither the mock of tongues nor the contempt of sinners can deprive me of the inward delights of a conscience void of offence!"

"Stand out of the way," said Raith, hastily, for he had the birr of battle yet upon him, and was not inclined to measure words with Peter. "Did I not bid you stay with Mr. Peden? besides which you are well aware what Captain Grif promised you if he caught you on this side of the hill."

Peter's lips moved as he went meekly and forgivingly away.

"It was a pity," he said, "but after all I did the best. There was just a chance that that young lad Grey (deil tak' him!) should not ken o' the cave. But," he murmured, "for these ill words and hard usages, it is a comfort to think that I can aye add something to the reckoning when it comes to settling day! Aye, it is a comfort that!"

When Peter reached the cave in which William Ellison and the Prophet remained together, he found them both fallen silent, and forthwith he began to relate the wonderful providences of which he had been witness and partaker—the defeat and retirement of the dragooners, the losses they had sustained, and his own fortunate discovery of the cave with the provisions. He had begun to urge the need of remembering this to his own credit.

But Peden looked him through and through. Then he paused a little as if to decide whether or not he was worth wasting words upon. But all that he said was only this:

"Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord."

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

THE FIGHT IN THE MIST

The defences of the Hill of Aron are easy to be understood—the river making a bend like the head of a pair of sheep-shears—round the craggy bosky mountain, the only way of attack being along the shank of the level shelterless plain, the narrow pass guarded by a solid curtain of rock up which one difficult path straggled—Ben Aron was altogether a place which might have been held against an army.

But Sir Robert Grier of Lag was not a man to be discouraged by a little, nor had he come so far to go home, as he said, "with his finger in his mouth."

He had still eighty-five good men, and from the reports of those who had remarked the musket shots, he made out that a dozen at the outside was the number of the defenders.

"They are noways ordinary Covenanters," he said to Roddie; "no canting Psalm-singer would have chosen such a place to fight in. Think of them at Dunbar when they stood against Noll, at Loudon Hill even when they chased Clavers, at Bothwell, and at the Moss of Ayr—why, to get on the level with a ditch in front, and be shot down, or ridden down, or cut down, while their ministers prayed their loudest—these were ever the tactics of the Saints!"

"If it pleasure you to hear it," said Roddie, "I judge that the fact of this stubborn defence assures us of our principal prize—the late Governor of the Bass—a very extraordinary man, Sir Robert!"

"So extraordinary that shooting will be too good for him—I must think of something else!" said his chief.

"Yes, and have the Government take him out of your hands while you are thinking," said Roddie; "for me I advise a well-nourished volley within five minutes of his taking!"

"We have to take him first, though," said Lag, "and find our way up that ugly craggy rock there!"

He looked up at Ben Aron as he spoke with manifest disfavour.

"A cannon would be no inconsiderable help," he mused, "but we dare not wait to send for it. We should have Colonel Grahame at our heels to take all the credit, and have the prisoners tried at Edinburgh according to law."

Finally Roddie and his master arranged the great assault for the early morning of the next day.

"We must overpower them with numbers," said Lag, "Grif Rysland is an old bird to catch napping."

The dry fog called "the Hill-folks Mist" blew over the level moorland at four o'clock of the following morning. Many a time and oft it had hidden the wanderers from the anger of their enemies. But now on the contrary, under cover of it, two-thirds of Lag's force found themselves unseen and unexpected, to all appearances, at the bottom of the steep wall, and immediately under the guns of the sleeping garrison.

Out on the plain the watch-fires were still winking, and Lag's troop-horses neighed at their pickets. But about the Hill of Aron there was a great silence. Lag had detached twenty men to attempt a diversion towards the hills at the back. They were to keep up a steady fire, and if possible, should they come upon any trunks of trees or material fit for a raft, they were to attempt the passage seriously. At any rate their action would divide the garrison, and make the success of the frontal attack almost certain.

Sir Robert himself remained, like Grif, a little back on a knoll from which he could command the most part of the battle-field. Here, he fretted at his own inaction. For to render the devil his due, Lag was no coward in battle, whatever my Lord of Liddesdale might hint as to his disrelish for single combat.

But to catch the weasel asleep was a simple matter compared with the task of finding Grif Rysland unprepared. From the night movements athwart the militia camp-fires, from the unsleeping hum and bustle among the men, he had long ago deduced a night attack. The neighing of horses, and the distant sound of orders given in a military manner from across the river, informed him that there would be also an attack in the rear, or at least the semblance of it. Accordingly he despatched the elder Simpson with one of the more active prisoners, Turner of Crochmore, to watch Lag's squadron as it rounded the hill, and be ready to fire upon them, if they attempted to cross the water and take the position in the rear. Grif Rysland did not, however, believe that there was for the present any idea of that.

Upon passing the cave James Simpson cried in as to their errand, and Peden, seizing a musket which had been left there for their protection, declared to their utter surprise that he would march with them.

"And do you, William Ellison," he said, "abide here and uphold all our hands in prayer! Sandy—auld Sandy, there remains but little time to you upon the earth. Ye have prayed long enough, mayhap sometimes even wearied Him with your cryings and groanings. Now see if you can do any better at the fighting trade. If a bullet comes your way, it will be the quicker way—goin'—even as Richard died at Ayrs Moss, so it was good to die! It was but the other day that I sat upon his tomb!"

And in spite of all James Simpson could say, in spite of all entreaties the Prophet persisted in accompanying them, and the utmost they could do, was to post him behind a great jagged splinter of rock with orders not to fire until the enemy should discharge their muskets, while they themselves went down close to the water's edge to observe the movements of the turning squadron, which, having to make a long detour, had not yet come into sight.

Having completed these arrangements, and those for the frontal attack remaining the same as on the previous night, Grif Rysland lay down with an easy mind, two muskets ready to his hand loaded with buck-shot, with which to sweep the path up the rock, should any assailant gain a footing upon it.

Raith made his rounds below, full of responsibility and anxious thought, which more than anything else banishes fear in a young soldier.

The cloud of bluish-grey mist subtly advancing over the moor, sinking now into the scooped-out hollows, anon making a leap for an outlying crag, hanging upon it a moment as if by spider filaments, and then swallowing it whole, at last banked itself up against the mural breast of the barrier of Ben Aron.

Deepening like water behind a dam it rose foot by foot, till it puffed chill and marsh-scented in the faces of the defenders. Then with a jerk it reared and poured over. They were in the midst of the grey smother, which streamed in coils and strands over their heads, and five minutes later had swallowed the mountain wholly, save only the highest peaks which stood clear in the blue air and pale silver sunshine of the autumn morning.

"Now," cried Lag, "at them!"

Then with a cheer and a rush, every part of the defenders' line of rock was assaulted at once. The booted feet of horsemen could be heard slipping and scraping on the stone as they painfully ascended. They cursed as they slid down again. They swore as they parted with the skin of their finger-tips on the keen-edged razory shale. Still not a gun was fired. Surely the enemy were asleep indeed, for they made noise enough to wake the dead. Or, could it be that they had escaped altogether? On the contrary—very much on the contrary—Grif's orders were not to fire till you could see your enemy's coat buttons—then to pick the third and aim for that.

"This plan," he explained, "saved a great deal of time in the German wars. We were troubled with no prisoners—burying parties being sufficient."

And so with Grif and Raith in the centre, immediately over the path Gil Ellison and Grey of Chryston at the corners, and the others scattered along the line, the Covenanters waited until, through a momentary thinning of the mist, the panting, straggling assault party appeared beneath.

"Let go!" shouted Grif, and with one of his buck-shot-laden pieces he raked the path, tumbling the awkward dismounted troopers about like so many rabbits. Again he cleared a zigzag with his second gun, but even so there were too many on the narrow roadway. The mist had served the turn of the assailants well, and a couple of men would have leaped into the camp, falling over Grif, who lay immediately at the top, had not Raith seen the danger, and discharging his musket at the foremost, and clubbing the second with the butt, he tumbled them both back over the rock-face.

"Thank you for that, friend," said Grif, as he reloaded calmly, "I will do as much for you when I get a whole skin upon me again. That thief Tyars has handicapped me cruelly for this sort of work. How go the others?"

It went well with the others. Two men likewise had succeeded in mounting at the western angle, but Gil Ellison and his comrade had used their weapons with such absolute obedience to orders that the third buttons of both were missing even at their funerals, having (it is believed) been carried into the wounds along with the bullets.

Lag's morning attack had failed on the front. But from the rear they still heard the sound of musketry. Grif ordered Raith, his eyes and ears as he called him, to slip around cautiously and see what was the progress of events there. Accordingly he took his way over the shoulder of the hill. Behind and beneath him was the wreckage of Lag's attack. Some of the dismounted troopers were lying still. Others were trying to carry away their comrades. Yet more were trailing themselves painfully along. At the eastern end he saw a dark mass in the water, which he supposed to be some one fallen from the cliff, shot in the act of trying to ascend. The main body of the fugitives had reached their horses, and he could see Lag's figure and the flash of the steel as he thrashed the terrified men with the flat of the blade. Roddie used a riding whip, a weapon which had perhaps painful memories for his master. Nevertheless, between them, they succeeded in stopping the tide of flight.

Raith passed the cave among the rocks. He could see his father sitting alone in the mouth, and he called to him to withdraw farther within. A chance bullet he thought might possibly reach him. But his father, steeped in meditation, sat on, the thin chill mist stirring his white hair.

But Raith was wholly unprepared for what he saw next. He could hear as he rounded the rugged angle of the copse-covered hill, a constant rattle of musketry, and occasionally, when the light wind which carried the mist permitted, a mighty voice that came in bursts and reverberations, as if doors were opened and shut between him and it.

As he advanced the mist cleared. Indeed the mass of Ben Aron itself had divided and broken it up. Now it was flying away on either side, thin and faint as the northern streamers. A watery sun seemed to be trying to glimmer through a sky the colour of tin-plate.

But close down by the water's edge, erect on a pinnacle of rock, like a statue on a pedestal, stood Peden the Prophet. He held a gun in his hand, by the middle of the barrel. Sometimes he shook this at his adversaries on the opposite bank. These had dismounted and stood ranked upon the shore. They were firing constantly, loading at will and firing wildly like soldiers without an officer. They were also laughing loudly.

Bullets whizzed and snapped about the prophet. But he seemed to regard them no more than so many booming dor-beetles at even-fall heard about the doors of his manse at the Muir Kirk of Glenluce.

From where he stood Raith could hear the troopers betting who would first wing the old corbie, who would bring him down, and what each would get from the government out of the great price that was set upon his head.

"If he will only stand there and croak long enough," said one, "I swear I will have him. I saw that last bullet of mine make the fur fly!"

And indeed at that moment a piece of Peden's white hair, clipped by a flying ball, had fluttered down to the river, upon whose sombre breast it sailed slowly away, light as an autumn leaf.

"How to get to him," thought Raith; "he stands it well, but—this cannot go on. Even Lag's troopers, bad shots as they are, must hit him some time!"

So far as Raith could make out as he cautiously approached, this was the burden of Mr. Peden's malediction.

"Spear is not sharped," he cried, "iron is not wrought that shall pierce me. Your lead flies harmless. Hearken ye, devil's brains, and cease your noise that I may speak. My time is not yet—yours is at hand. He shall hide me secretly in his pavilion. He is my shield and my buckler. No one of you shall come near me in life—in death what ye may do to me, it matters little to the poor bones and clay which have so long tethered old Sandy!"

He paused a moment only to resume with fiercer accent.

"Hearken, ye drunken with the blood of the saints, go back and tell your master that he shall live long, but it shall be to yearn daily for the death which is denied to him. He shall suffer the pangs of the damned while yet upon the footstool. Hell shall devour him quick, while his feet tread the earth and his mouth drinks in the caller air. From him the books are shut and the seal set! But for you—poor ignorant blaspheming wretches, thus saith the Lord—'Flee from before the great and stormy wind of my fury. I will break down your wall which ye have made, and this false King's wall, that he hath daubed with untempered Popish mortar—yea, I will bring it to the ground'!"

But at that moment, in the midst of a yet more bitter storm of bullets, which still flew harmless by, Raith took careful aim and stretched one of the chief fusileers upon the opposite bank, an event which caused a sharp retreat of the rest toward their horses.

Raith, without pausing to think, put out his hand and pulled the Prophet into shelter. For even now the fugitives ever and anon stopped to fire back, and a bullet chipped white the boulder on which Mr. Peden was standing, buzzing between his feet and out again over Raith's head. Yet the Prophet regarded it no more than the fall of a bird's dropping in his prison of the Bass.

Instead he turned wrathfully on his preserver.

"Ye have looked on the ark of God," he cried, "even when I was bearing it up before these Philistines of Ekron. But beware lest ye be smitten, as He smote the men of Bethshemish, even as He smote Uzzah the son of Abinadab, in the place which is called Perez-uzzah unto this day, because he put forth and touched the ark of God upon its new cart! Yet, seeing that in ignorance ye did it, I will intercede the Lord for you. And indeed, to my own eye's seeing, your powder and ball worked more powerfully with yonder Ashdodites and Dagon-worshippers than all the words of Alexander Peden, whom they falsely call the Prophet. But I am an old man and leg-weary. Let us go hence. For the word that was given me to speak—I have spoken it. And lo! it was as wind unto them!"

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

THE WAMPHRAY CHIEL

VICTORY was very well, but there were two, and those the leaders, who had within them sore and anxious hearts. Not so much for their position on Ben Aron. That for the present was impregnable. Lag had drawn off his bands, and now confined himself to a circle of outposts, from which he maintained a watch upon the hill and its defenders.

Evidently he was awaiting reinforcements, and possible cannon such as had been used at Bothwell.

But Grif Rysland and Raith felt that they could no longer wait with any patience. They had been interrupted in their quest, and they must at all risks and hazards find out what had happened to Ivie and the Ellisons, the three women who held their hearts.

When Mr. Peden was approached for his opinion, he sat a long while gloomy and pulled at his long beard.

"Go," he said, at length, "ye may bring deliverance to such as count it precious. As for me, I have gotten my marching orders for another world, but my heart is wae for these poor things here! Also ye may lighten the hearts of the women—who, because of their weakness, have the spirit easily made heavy—though not for long—not for long!"

So, all having been arranged to the mind of Grif Rysland upon the fortress of Ben Aron, the second place in the command was given to Gil Ellison, who seemed nothing elated or depressed thereby, but settled into his duty with his usual alert silence. Raith made a parcel of provender, and took counsel with Long-bodied John Paton how best he should gain the mainland. The fisher looked contemptuously at the black water, which doubtless seemed narrow enough to him, as do all inland waters to those whose eyes are accustomed to the sea.

"I suppose ye are not particular about crossing on horseback," he said. "From what I can see of the country yont there to the southard, I should prefer shank's naigie mysel'!"

Raith told him that, so being he got over himself, he asked for no better. "Then," said John, "ye must swim for it, and I will ferry over your clothes and the victuals."

Raith bade Grif farewell without many words.

"I need not tell you what to do," said the latter; "what thing you decide upon concerning Ivie, my daughter, I will stand to, knowing that you love her even as I! As for the others, one is your mother and the other your sister. You do not need to be told what lies between you and any that may have wronged them in a hair's-breadth. But if ye see Euphrain Ellison in the flesh, forget for a moment that she is your sister, and tell her that Grif Rysland bade you say that he kept troth."

At the cave his father kissed him—for the first time that ever Raith remembered.

"It may be," he said, "that I have been mista'en—that all unwitting I have been an ill father to you!"

As for Mr. Peden he only said, "Laddie, ye have far to gang—a sore road and a doubtful ending. Your tongue will maybe carry you farther than your sword, little as ye think it now. But mind ye this, if (as I did never) ye would win favour with the great—and considering that which ye seek I blame you not—remember to fleech them and phrase them as ye would your ain lass at a lover's tryst! But above all, young man, be not wise in your own conceits!"

Raith swam the black clammy flood of the Aron Water with a cord about his waist and a bundle of reeds under his chin. Then Long-bodied John drew back the reeds with the cord while Raith paid out the other end. And so on this simple raft Raith's clothes, his arms and provender were dealt out to him as he stood naked in the gloom of the peat bank by the shore, with the watch-fires of the enemy burning on every hill-ridge and wood edge far and near. John Paton pulled the cord and the rushes came back hand over hand. Then he whistled a seamew cry to signify that all was right, and the last link with the little defenced world of Ben Aron was cut for Raith Ellison.

There was no difficulty for one so fleet of foot as Raith to escape the vigilance of the sentries. For, save in the immediate vicinity of Lag himself, no strict guard was attempted, as indeed is mostly the way with irregular troops. As Grif Rysland had always said, "Were it not for lame men and old men, the blind men and the men possessed, I would risk taking to the hills in spite of Lag and all his horses. But we have too many to hamper us, who have not the right use of their limbs—and of these the most useless and decrepit is Grif Rysland himself!"

* * * * * *

It was towards Lag's own country that Raith now made his way, hiding and sleeping by day, travelling with immense speed all the night, so that in the morning he could do no more than nibble at his hard rye-bread and smoked ham, drink a draught of water, and so fling himself down with his sword in his hand and his pistols ready.

It chanced that late one evening he had turned somewhat too carelessly into a broader way in a country of trees. A man who had been stretching himself at the roots of a great elm rose lazily and came towards him.

"You travel well-armed," he said; "whither away, stranger, an it be a fair question?"

"I go to the south upon my errands," Raith answered his interlocutor, who seemed a great, hearty, not ill-humoured man, also armed with pistol and sword, but, unlike Raith, carrying no musket.

"So it would seem, by the direction of your nose. Mine also points south," laughed the man, "but that is as good as to say 'Mind your own business.' However, I have to travel all this night, and the country is not a very healthy one for lads like you and me. So for that I made bold to accost you!"

"For what do you take me, then?" demanded Raith, amused in his turn.

"I will tell you," answered the blonde-moustached giant, "either a deserting dragoon, off to see his sweetheart, or—on the same errand as myself—sent to bring up more Annandale rogues to fill the blanks in Sir Robert's bees'-byke! I am sure I have seen you about the Irongray. I am from Westerha' mysel', as ye may hear by the gollying of my Annandale tongue. Sir James ordered us out, and we had no more than arrived when Lag sent me south again to beg for further succour—saying that the Whigs had thrashed him soundly, but that if Sir James Johnstone would only stand by him for this once, he had such a haul of blue-bonnets under his hand as had not been caught together since Pentland!"

"And how," asked Raith, "did you come to recognise me for one of Lag's men?"

"Man," cried the other, winking cautiously through the gloom, "is there not still the regimental number on that great musket that ye carry, and the King's crown on your sword-basket? And I can guess mair. Ye are the drill sergeant that Clavers lent Lag to learn his lads the manual. It's a sair, sair life ye maun hae o't! And if so be that ye are desertin', Robin Johnstone o' Wamphray is no the lad to say a word! But tell me, lad, is it a maitter o' a lass?

Man, I'm real fond o' them mysel'—juist desperate, and up the Moffat water they caa' me the Chiel o' Wamphray!"

"It is indeed the matter of a lass," said Raith, smiling, "two of them, indeed!"

"Dear—a-me! Do you say sae noo?" cried the Wamphray Chiel. "But it tak's some gumption to work them separate! I hae tried it, but, mustard and ingins, it needs a cleverer falla than Robin! They were aye sure to hear o't sooner or later. And then, Lord, the scailin' o' a wasps' nest was naething to them! But heard ye o' the Houston ploy the ither week? There were lasses for ye—three o' them, nae less!"

There came a leap into Raith's heart at the name. The dead Houston of Houston had been Grif Rysland's enemy, and if there was any vengeance in the carrying off of Ivie, it was sure to come from that quarter.

"I had not heard," he said. "Who is this Houston?"

"I will tell you as we go our way," chirruped the other; "two such honest fellows, and well-wishers to the gentry we serve, should e'en keep company!"

"My errand does not bear much company-keeping," said Raith.

"What about the twa lasses?" said the other, all a-grin at his own wit.

"Tell me about this Houston, then," said Raith, "and we can keep the breadth of the road between us." Raith had his right hand ready in case of need, but the rough, simple nature of the Annandale man betrayed itself at every step. He was pleased beyond words to have some one to talk to through the night watches.

"This Houston of Houston, it seems, was a wild lad in his day, and like oor Sir Jeems a great friend o' the Laird o' Lag ahint us yonder. And *that* ye ken is verra likely to stand him in good stead as a recommend where he is this day—and that's nae ither place than in Muckle Hell! For it is said that he spak' some ill o' a lass, the dochter o' some puir officer o' dragoons—but for a' his poverty a linkin' lad, wi' a sword as lang as the day and the morn. So the twa o' them focht ower aboot the Irongray. And —*click*—there was the lass's faither's sword through atween his ribs, as easy as if he had been a caff-bed. And that was the last o' the Laird o' Houston in this world!"

"But is that all?" demanded Raith, who as yet had heard nothing he did not know.

"A'—hear till him!" cried his neighbour; "man, it's juist the beginnin' o' the tale. Weemen are unruly evils, as the guid buik says. They are at the bottom o' a' trouble, ever since that bit maitter o' breakin' the branches and eatin' the bonny aipples. No that I care for aipples mysel', but I suppose weemen are different—we are never sure frae ae minute to anither what they wad be after! Being a married man mysel', Lord, I should ken!"

Raith demanded of Robin Johnstone of Wamphray with some heat and asperity the remainder of the story about the Lord o' Houston, and found himself thus rebuked.

"Faith, man, but ye are a hasty blade. Ane wad think that the lassock was aiblins ane o' your twa. Ha, ha! I had ye there. What's the wondrous haste? I like tellin' tales and there's the hale nicht afore us. I tell ye that there's naething to gar the feet gang ower the road like a weel-telled tale, if it werena a weel-sung sang. Even whustlin' is guid when ane has the lilt o't. Can ye whustle 'The Rigs o' Barley'?

"Gang on—of coorse I'll gang on. I am tellin' ye a' the time, am I no? It was this—or at ony rate it cam' to this in the upshot, that the Laird o' Houston—him that got the poke in the ribs wi' the dragooner's lang sword and needed nae mair—weel, he had fower brithers. And what did they do, but they made a league wi' their neighbour Roarin' Rob Grier, that is aye ripe for ony mischief, and, they say, wi' anither greater man, that ye can caa' the Yerl o' Kingsberry gin ye like—and ye'll no be tellin' ony great lee, either—an' they gaed to catch the man that did it, for the slayin' o' their brither. And what they wad hae dune if they had catched him, ye can think yoursel'. He wadna hae gotten muckle time to say his prayers, I'm thinkin'!

"But the bird was awa', though the nest was warm. But what did the ill-contrived loons do, but they grippit the bonny lass that was the cause o' a' this. And alang wi' her they took twa ithers, near as bonny as hersel'—so they say—and aff they rode wi' them to Houston! Where they hae them safe under lock and key—naebody being the wiser, except twa or three like oursel's, that are little likely to spoil sport. It's deil's truth, bein' as I had it frae ane that rade a' the way to the North, within sicht o' the Bass Rock, and back again, and gat gowden guineas for his wark, whilk he hid, and for haudin' his tongue, whilk he didna—or I wad hae kenned nocht o' the ploy! What think ye o' that, na?"

Robin of Wamphray laughed aloud and slapped his thigh at the jest.

"That's what I caa' something like a revenge," he said, "far better than putting swords through a man or blawin' his brains oot!"

"I think our ways separate here," said Raith hurriedly, "I must keep more to the westward." And with that he left his informant standing open-mouthed in the road gazing after him. In a minute, however, he had recovered him.

"Dolt that I am," he said, "I believe ane o' the three was his lass after a'—very likely the yin that belanged to the dragooner. He had the mark o' the regiment on his gun. Aye, that will be it!"

Now Robin Johnstone had a warm heart under his rude exterior, for he ran up to a hill-top and shouted after Raith.

"Ye maun haud doon the glen to the left, and keep on till ye sight the tap o' Kingsberry hill, that is shaped like a wave o' the sea. Then Houston will be easy fand, in a hollow by the tide. But if the lass be your lass, I advise ye to get a horse under your hip and travel as fast as may be. There's a man ower by, at the farm on the hill yonder, that will lend ye ane, if ye tell him that Robin Johnstone of Wamphray sent ye!"

Raith shouted his thanks, and as far as he could see and a good deal farther than he could hear, Robin of Wamphray stood on his heathery knowe, and shouted advice as to the conduct of his affairs, presumed to be amorous and certainly vindictive.

At the farm on the hill the people had gotten them to bed when Raith knocked, but a man cautiously pushed out the bell-mouth of a blunderbuss like a spy-glass to take a first view of the surroundings, and his eye glanced along the barrel at Raith.

He in turn, being interrogated, stated his authority and proffered his request. The first was well received but the existence of any horse was denied, apparently however upon strong compulsion from within. For a voice could be heard dully as if muffled by bed-clothes, stating it as a fact that Robin Johnstone was no better than he should be, and that all his night-raking friends were likely to be no improvement upon himself. Finally and especially he was to shut that window and come back to his warm bed.

But Raith, mindful of the sugar on the tongue, which Peden the Prophet had recommended to him, told how his mother, his sister, and his sweetheart had all been carried off, and his urgent need of a horse to enable him to pursue them. Also the farmer had heard tell of his uncle and cousins, the Simpsons of Nether Barnton.

"And a decent well-doing man, if indeed he be an uncle of yours!" he said, more inclined than ever to kindness.

"Haud doon your lantern, guidman, and let me see the lad's face," said his wife; "that is a better certification to a woman's e'e than a barrelfu' o relationships."

"Tak' off your bonnet, laddie, if it please ye! John, keep awa' that nesty gun!"

The command came from above, and Raith obeyed—as it is to be supposed, so did John.

"Bairn, bairn," cried a voice, "ye are but a bairn—though like David in the Scriptures, ye make me wae to look at ye—carryin' a' that great back-burdens o' the weapons o' deadly war. Bide there and stir na a foot, while I rax a wilicoat ower my head. Then come your ways ben and tell me aboot your mither, while John is oot catchin' the powny wi' a feed o' corn!"

While the good man was at his appointed work of bringing in the pony, from regions unknown, his wife dressed herself, and also incidentally quieted a fretful child somewhere in the higher regions of the house by a summary process, worthy of being briefly recorded. The child had been "whingeing" or crying for it knew not what, with a peculiarly long-drawn-out fretfulness ever since Raith approached the dwelling.

"What do ye want, ye bleatin' blastie?" demanded the energetic mother.

"I—w-a-a-ant—a-white-thing!"

"D' ye think a brown thing wadna do as weel?" asked the mother, softly.

The bairn considered a moment and thought it might.

The "brown thing" proving to be the pliable sole of a slipper, the application being singularly conscientious, and the bairn finding the "brown thing" to meet the case with unexpected completeness, the "whingeing" ceased on the instant.

To Raith, waiting below, the mistress of the house entered, the "brown thing" on her foot. She was comely to see, arrayed only in bedgown and petticoat, and she was breathing a little hastily with honest toil.

"Aweel," she cried, as she looked at her visitor smilingly, "this is a bonny time o' nicht to raise decent wives oot o' their beds! But if it's to help ye, laddie, ye are welcome to ony beast aboot Simeon Fennick's place. And it's his wife Peg that says it, ye need speer nae ither leave."

It was with considerable difficulty that Raith drew himself away from this hospitable dwelling so unexpectedly opened to him. He left behind him his musket, deciding at the last moment that he would ride the lighter without it, and besides he had regretted deeply for the last dozen miles that he had ever brought it from the cave of Ben Aron.

Mistress Fennick, however, made him unload it carefully before her eyes, under the "threat that if he left siccan a deadly thing aboot her hoose, she would pour a pail of water down the muzzle." Afterwards she fed him with oatcake, stayed him with flagons, comforted him with apples, with other delights—and when he was on the doorstep ready to mount, she kissed his cheek with a hearty smack, calling after him that she hoped when the bairns grew up, her Watty would prove just such another! Also that for the sake of his own mother Raith was to be sure to bring back the pony himself, when she would have more and better for him than the hasty guest's cheer of a night.

"And come decently in the daytime," she added, "when a body had some chance o' making themsel's decent and Sabbath-like, and no looking for a' the world as if they had been harled through a thorn hedge feet-first!"

So with a cordial promise to return and thank Simeon Fennick and his wife for his reception, Raith Ellison rode forth into the night, well mounted, well comforted, and lightened every way.

He was now on his last stage. The mystery of the disappearance had to some extent been explained. There remained only to find the lost three. And Raith's heart grew full of anger and his will became like iron as he rode on towards the House of Houston to deliver his mother, and Euphrain, and Ivie—or if not, to do justice—for himself and for Grif Rysland—upon the Houstons one and all.

"Grif slew one," thought Raith, setting his face hard. "If there is aught to avenge—well, there are four left for me!"

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

THE HOUSE OF WITCHCRAFT

NIGHT had fallen upon the worn towers and steep red-tiled roofs of the house of Houston-in-the-Hollow. The trees about the avenue gloomed and drooped in a dank autumnal fog, which, creeping up from the sea, remained long in the trough of the gorge, as if it had been a salt pool left behind by the retiring tide.

It was a strange house, that of Houston, during these days. There rested a cloud upon the mind of the master like the evil spirit from the Lord that was upon Saul, when he sat apart with his javelin in his hand and none dared to speak to him. So Stephen Houston dwelt apart. He had sent away old Sue the very next day after the duel in the great dining-room. Some of the other servants he had got rid of upon various pretexts. Some had fled from the fiercer unreasonableness of his anger. His once sweet and melancholy nature seemed utterly changed. He grew violent and uncertain, when he was not utterly silent. And it was whispered that Sue Fairfoul, a known witch, if ever there was one, had sent a devil to torment him, because he had turned her away from the house, where, in his father's time, she had walked a queen.

At any rate there he sat, and it was the outcast Sue herself, who, stealing into the house by devious ways, cooked and set on the sideboard certain dishes, which, as often as not, she would find untouched next morning.

There was certainly something insane in the Houston blood. Even so had his father's end been, and the same reports of witchcraft had gone abroad concerning Sue. But that was long ago, and the supposed witch brought up the sons of the house with what in her lay of kindliness—though in the case of Tom, Hurst, and Archibald, she had certainly filled them with seven devils worse than those of their father. But Stephen had always dwelt apart. At the age of five he had gone to his mother's sister, who was married (so they said) to a great lord in England. Then, after he fell heir to his mother's fortune, Stephen Houston had lived in London.

Still on the whole his life had been solitary, and the disappointment of his hopes in the matter of Ivie, following perhaps on the sight of his brother's death in the quarry of Kersland, had unexpectedly brought out the family weakness.

This may serve in these days for an explanation, but then in the 17th century—when witchcraft was rampant, where great black bees flew even from archbishops' tobacco-boxes to change promptly into familiar spirits, there was but one explanation of his madness. Sue Fairfoul was a witch. Stephen Houston had turned her out of house and home. She had vowed to be revenged.

Very well then! And indeed there was little more to be said. The facts bore out the suspicions. Sue's stealthy visits were not set down to pity, or to the desire of providing food for a poor lonely man. Without doubt she gave him hellebore, and wolf's bane—or aconite possibly. Bloody-finger roots distilled in spiced wine was a known witches' drink. But plain roast and boil—baked bread and oat cakes? Well, there were fools in the world, but in all Lag's country there was no one such a fool as to believe that.

Furthermore—and it was a yet more strange thing—Stephen Houston sat at his empty table-end, pistol in hand or sword by his side. He did not say anything—only stared at the door with a fixed wistful hopefulness.

People said that he was expecting some one—the devil, averred the country folk. Ivie Rysland, thought My Lord, when he heard of it.

But neither for angel of light nor for angel of darkness did Stephen Houston wait. He expected a man to come, and he was waiting for him. All the house in the hollow was gloomy about and above him—gloomy and grey and silent, with, to his poor troubled eyes, strange shapes lurking in corners and stealing athwart windows at which the winds wailed and the stars looked in.

Meantime, beneath in the kitchen and store-places, Sue Fairfoul, the witch-wife, went and came, silent and flitting as a ghost. In these days Houston-in-the-Hollow was verily a House of Witchcraft.

* * * * * *

Dusk had fallen when Raith went up the glen. He met, first, a ploughman who stared at him with pale frightened face when he asked the way to the House of Houston. The man's lips moved in a mutter of prayer. If he had been a Catholic he would have crossed himself. As it was he looked Raith well over from head to foot, so that if he should turn out to be the devil going to seize his own, he might be able afterwards to claim some acquaintance in case of need.

But Jack of the Plough-stilts did not speak. That might have given the Evil One some claim over his soul. He only pointed with his finger in the direction of the wizard-haunted mansion, hidden and drowned in the deep green shades of the pines, and with the cliffs standing up purple behind it.

A boy caught marauding after nuts and crab-apples was of more use. His eye was taken by the glint of Raith's sword and pistols. He had a long way to go, thought the boy, and he wished that this tall man would spare him one of these to go back with. There was no reason why he should, but perhaps if he spoke him fair he might lend him a weapon if only for the night. With a sword like that, or even a pistol, he would not be afraid of any bogle that ever walked—no, not of old Sue Fairfoul herself.

So he explained to Raith that he would find the way to Houston at the second turning of the path. Here he must dive down into the dark well of tree-tops, where you always shivered, even on the hottest days. There was a murder supposed to have been done there—indeed there were murder-spots all about Houston. That was partly why he liked to come.

But Raith had no time to hear about murders. Was there, he asked, much company at Houston? The boy could not tell, but there were gay doings, and plenty of them, over at Kingsberry. My Lord and My Lady both were there. Whole oxen and sheep were killed, roasted, and eaten there every day. He had been up with his mother to pay the "kane hens" to the housekeeper, who had said they were skinny old roasters and not worth the plucking. But then housekeepers always did say such things, and it never mattered that the boy could see. But as to the House of Houston, he did not know. He would not go near it at night, not for a thousand marks. Nobody went near it. It was haunted, and bad people came there. Strange voices were heard at night, and lights seen. But if the gentleman with the sword wanted to find out the road—he, Pate Binkie, would come—as far, that is, as the end of the loaning. The gentleman with the sword must be a rare and brave one. There was nobody in the village who would go there in broad daylight—except Sue Fairfoul, and of course, being a witch, she would, in a manner, be at home in a haunted house!

Such was Pate Binkie's report, and accordingly at the close of day, when the glen was looking at its eeriest, the boy left Raith at the tail-end of the long avenue of Houston, with a penny in his pocket for his trouble, and the confidence in his heart that he had seen the bravest man in the whole world.

There did not seem to be any great cause for fear, as Raith turned the corner which shut out the view of the sea, and the bats began to flit and dip about the treetops. There was only a great hush upon everything—a silence that was at first grateful, but afterwards grew oppressive even to Raith. He had fancied, and feared, the stormy ribaldry which was characteristic of Lag and his crew when in their cups. Then they called each other Beelzebub and Baran, Apollyon and Sathanas, according to their supposed characters.

But here was nothing—worse than nothing—a brooding silence which grew ever deeper and stiller as he advanced. Could all be over, and (his heart stood still!) Ivie, Euphrain, Marjory Simpson—all dead and in their graves?

The thought stopped him, trembling, and for the first time—he was afraid. The night shut down. The gorge closed in above. The trees, gloomy, tall, and desolate, cast ever a deeper shadow. Raith walked noiseless upon elastic pine needles, the path twining and twisting with the intricacies of the gorge. Before him the gloom darkened, presently growing black and overcast as if under the shadow of a mounting thunder-cloud. Partly it was the tall wooded cliff which closed the valley, and partly the real gloom of a storm that was coming up from the west. Raith might have noticed this had he not been too preoccupied, for it had been presaged by the red sunset and a certain pearling bubble on the sea like sparkling wine just poured into the cup.

Suddenly, without warning or expectation, Raith found himself on the very steps of the mansion. The towers of Houston-in-the-Hollow rose above him, a slaty-grey against the black of the night and the dense velvet of the overhanging cliff. Raith stumbled, and his sword jangled on the worn stones. But no sound followed from within. Not a dog barked in the courtyard. He pushed forward, the thought of Ivie strong upon him—of Ivie and his mother—but of Ivie first.

To his unmeasured surprise the great main door stood open wide as a castle gateway, yawning black like a cavern. From above, as he stood wondering, came the skarrow of lightning—a broad regularly-leaping flame, without noise, which illumined for a moment the hall at the entrance of which he stood. Raith could see the straight-backed chairs and armour ranged about, the deer heads and the grinning foxes above the doors—but no sign of human being. The sense of mystery grew upon him. They—those three dear to him—had been drawn to this trap. He knew it. Perhaps they had been murdered. Perhaps God had sent him to find their bodies—and the anger within him grew fiercer. Yes, earth and hell might league their powers, but he would go through with it in spite of them all. He had not come so far to turn back. And with the long clean *wheep* of steel leaving steel, he unsheathed his sword and began to ascend the wide staircase of Houston.

No rat scurried. Not a mouse cheeped. Almost he wished for the footsteps of men with whom he could fight for his life—for Ivie's life—for Ivie's honour—or to avenge her if she were dead. But no—no such good luck—he must go forward in this uncanny silence.

Now, he was at the first landing. The stair continued, mounting higher, with a long sweeping curve. He could see it clearly enough, because at regular intervals, the lightning of summer shook (as it were) a sheet-white banner above the house.

Corridors went right and left. Doors were ranged on either hand, open, nerve-shaking, silent also. Before him, swaying a little in the wind which blew in at the open archway beneath, a presage of the storm, was a wide door. Through it, as the lightning pulsed, he could see the long narrow strip of a window—clean of hangings, of curtains, of anything.

Raith pushed with his left hand and at the same moment lowered the point of his sword. Nothing moved. He entered, and in a moment, as if moved by a spring like a wolf-trap, something gripped his feet. He was flung back. The door clapped to behind him with an appalling noise. He felt himself enveloped, taken, triced against the door. His sword was jerked from his hand. He felt a rope which tightened about his neck. Beneath, a woman was fixing some ligature about his feet. He could see her and the great bare window mounting up to the ceiling as often as that white silent banner of flame fluttered without.

He noted also a long table that ran the length of the room, terminating nearly opposite the door to which he had been fastened. When the next flash came, Raith saw the figure of a man seated there—a figure which, he was certain, had not been there a minute before, when he had seen the old woman binding his feet.

"Ah," said a voice, "behold at last—the chosen—the preferred—the gay soldier—Master Raith Ellison, sometime commander of the Bass in the absence of its governor, now, by the last advices from Edinburgh, become a rebel, whom no man need mourn. Well, as you see, we have been expecting you for some time, Master Raith Ellison! Light the candles, Sue. We keep a poor forlorn house, and send out no invitations, but since this gay soldier has seen fit to visit us, we must do our best to entertain him."

Slowly one candle and then another was lighted by old Sue, and Raith was enabled to see his surroundings more at leisure. The man who had spoken sat in his chair by the table-head. He leaned carelessly back and played with one of Raith's own pistols, raising the dog and snapping it.

"This is not primed, Sir Soldier," he said, looking up reproachfully at Raith; "what abominable carelessness in a man of war. Are you a marksman, Master Raith? *For I am.*"

And then Raith had one of the greatest surprises of his life. For this gentle, melancholy-looking young man picked up a huge horse-pistol from the table, and without taking aim fired it carelessly straight at him. Raith felt what seemed to be a sharp pinch between the finger and thumb of his right hand, where it was fastened with a band to the door. He could feel the blood running down and trickling drop by drop from his thumb.

"Your own fault," said the strange young man, shaking his head at him with an air of reproof, "you must spread your fingers wider apart. It really was entirely your own fault. See, we will try it on the other hand!"

He picked another pistol from the table, and fired with as little aim as before. Raith felt the wind of the bullet and the jar of the wood as it entered.

"Now," said the young man, "move your thumb slightly and you will feel that it has really hit the mark. Is it not a pretty trick? But," he went on, "truly I have had a deal of practice whilst I have been waiting here for you."

And Stephen Houston waved his hand about the room. Raith's eyes, fascinated, followed the gesture, and he was astonished to see everywhere ornaments smashed, above the mantelpiece a family portrait with the eyes represented by black holes, a row of dents in the shape of a cross driven in a great silver tankard, the black oak of the walls perforated in curious patterns, the ceilings marked with common catchwords and phrases, mostly in Latin—"Atra Cura Sedet

Post,"—and then, done with monstrous ability, the figure of a horseman at full gallop.

Raith knew instinctively that this must be one of the Houstons, and that he had fallen into a snare. But he did not understand at once that the man before him was mad, that he had carried out his plans alone, or at most with only the assistance of one old woman.

Under the punctured horseman another inscription had been begun, but after completion it had been defaced with bullets wilfully fired, and all that stood out clear was one word done in closely placed shots and in large capitals:

"IVIE."

"I see," remarked Stephen Houston, in his curiously easy and conversational tone, "you are looking at my horseman. Your professional eye, of course, detects that he wears his sword on the wrong side. But—I am only a beginner. We shall do better yet, now that you are come."

He rang a little hand-bell placed on the table beside him.

"Swing the door about," he said, "and I will prove to this gentleman that I am something of a marksman with the small arm, though, as there is a good deal of wood to penetrate, I must use the largest pistols with which, as I need not tell you, less accuracy is possible. But first, stand off a moment, Sue, and give me a candle. It is no such easy task, this—to make a picture of a handsome dragoon to please the eye of his lady. *She shall come and see it.* Oh yes, I will warrant you of that. I will mark it through and through without drawing blood—the head and limbs complete, a bullet between each finger. And then—to make everything perfect, just one little hole through the heart. After that, Sue, we will fetch her here, the pretty Ivie! We will lay the table as for a banquet! My Lord, too, and My Lady, who are so kind, so kind! We will invite them. They have most pressingly invited me! I will render them their courtesy again. Then I will show them the picture on the door, drawn to the life. The Gallant Dragoon, it shall be named. And they will say—'Ah, 'tis spoilt. Your hand has slipped, Stephen. There is one little hole in the middle of the body high up—a mistake, like the sword on the wrong side of the cavalier—how came that there?'

"And then, Sue, I will turn the door on its hinges, and show them the Original. *And then they will see that the little hole driven with the silver button, is right through his heart.*

You shall lay your best spell upon that button, Sue, and it will pierce the heart of him that pierced me! There, Sue, now look well to the pistols. I will turn the door, and begin my painting."

Raith felt the great door turn on its hinges—he upon it as if crucified. It had been made to fold back into a recess, so that when open it would appear to be merely part of the black wainscoting of the hall. Presently he found himself in darkness, with his knees and breast pressing against the back of the recess.

"Now then, Sue, the pistols—the largest pistols, for the bullet must go clean through. What a blessing the panels were made thin on purpose to match the wainscoting!"

The voice came now from behind him, outside the door. A shot rang out. It penetrated the light panelling and clipped Raith's hair.

"Not so good, Sue," said the voice, "that went too near. We will do the outline of the body first, good Sue, and leave the head, which is the master-piece of man, till we have gotten our hand in."

Shot after shot rang out. The wood splintered and closed after the bullets. His garments were torn and pinched.

But after a while, shut in his narrow prison, and with the bullets of the madman cleaving the wood at intervals of a few seconds, his feet fast in the wolf-trap, a rope tight about his neck, Raith swooned away.

CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

'OUT OF THE DEPTHS I CRIED'

In the great wide house of Kingsberry and in the widest and best chamber thereof, Ivie Rysland could not compass sleep. It was a night heavy with the threat of thunder-weather. She had left the company and come up early, undressed, and now, in My Lady's French *batiste*, lay like a snowy cloud on the great curtained four-poster, to which she had mounted by steps. Through the windows she watched the pulsing of the lightning over the sea. She counted twenty-five very slowly and there was another flash. That, as near as might be, made ten seconds. But the flashes were coming faster now.

There was no reason for her discomfort that she knew of. My Lady, indeed, had just heard from her husband that all trace of the fugitives from the Bass had been lost.

Neither Grif, her father, nor Raith—her—friend, had been heard of. Yet in spite of the good news a great uneasiness weighed down the girl's heart. She started up, set herself to dress rapidly, threw a cloak about her shoulders, and went up to the high balcony called the King's Walk. It was a favourite promenade of hers, and My Lord, who spoiled her in everything, had ordered that a key should be given her to be used whenever she was so minded.

The King's Walk lay high up on the leads of Kingsberry, and by day overlooked many a league of sea and many an acre of land. She could even see the topmost pinnacles of Houston hidden deep in its glen, rising like rocky islets from a green sea.

"There—there," she thought, "there lies the danger!"

As when one awakes in the dawn with a great trouble heavy on the heart, but cannot disentangle it for a moment—so Ivie, on the high terrace of Kingsberry knew for the first time that she was afraid because of Something—Someone—over at that strange house in the hollow.

She did not argue about it. She knew. She felt, Raith would come and seek her. Then they would trap him. They would kill him—perhaps torture him. And she heard—well, it was impossible even though the wind blew lightly that she could hear—let us say rather that she thought she heard—the sound of gun-shots very faint in the direction of Houston.

Unable to contain herself a moment longer she rushed down-stairs to My Lady's apartments and knocked—first gently and then more loudly, for Meg of Rothesay, Countess Liddesdale, was a sound sleeper.

"Ah, you," said My Lady, "a moment—there! My bairn, but you are cold and all of a tremble! Come in beside me. Why, you are dressed. What is the matter?"

Then, bursting into an agony of tears, Ivie told the Countess all. Now there was little of fear about Robert, Duke of Rothesay's daughter—none of man, none of the devil, and they said, only by fits and starts, even of God.

"Bide, bairn," she said immediately, "I will go with you. We will see for ourselves, you and I. No, we will say nothing to My Lord. What need! He would only spoil sport! I will only leave a note telling him where to seek us, if we are not back for breakfast. Feared? What for should I be feared—of a blear-eyed old wife that should have been at the cart-tail years syne? My father would have had the hangman's whip scoring her back—my grandfather would have drowned her in a well like a blind puppy. And as for poor Steevie—have I not skelpit him mony a time for stealin' berries out o' the Kingsberry gardens? And what for then should I, Margaret of Rothesay, be afraid o' wee Steevie Houston, daft or wise, guid or ill—me that could grip three Steevies in my left hand and shake them till their very banes played castanets!"

Nevertheless she took a pistol in her own girdle and put a sword in Ivie's hand—"the very blade My Lord gied ye to make a hole in Roarin' Rob," explained the Countess, as they went their way. There was a short cut to Houston-in-the-Hollow down the side of the glade, which was well known to the Countess, and the whole distance being but half-a-mile, it was not long before they were at the great open archway at the top of the steps.

Shot after shot within—each followed by loud laughter—that is what the two women heard. What they *saw* was only a glimmer of candle-light from the staircase, at the top of which the door of the dining-room stood wide open, back to the wall, as My Lady had seen it on great occasions in the old laird's time.

"There's some devil's work going forward there," whispered My Lady, standing up at Ivie's side tall as any grenadier of the guard; "ready and quiet, lass! Up we go!"

And they mounted stealthily, Ivie's hand stealing out to be sure that her stronger companion was beside her. It was her one symptom of fear.

"Load the pistols quicker, Sue," cried a voice, "and have the one with the silver button ready—you know the one for that—Tom's big long-barrelled musket that he had carried to the Whig-hunting. Is it ready, Sue?"

The two women stood in the wide doorway, gazing. Stephen Houston, his long black hair falling all about his face, from which ever and anon he twisted it nervously back, sat firing horse-pistol after horse-pistol at some part of the room they could not see. He did not observe them at first, as My Lady and Ivie stood stiff with amazement in the open space of the landing. But Sue Fairfoul did, and becked to them, and mocked behind her master's back, even when she was handing him the loaded pistols.

"There wants little now," he cried; "there stands Raith Ellison, the handsome dragoon, done to the life—nothing wanting but the little red hole through the heart! And then—to-morrow—we shall have a visit from Mistress Ivie, and her kind friend My Lady!"

"Ah!" he cried, suddenly catching sight of the two women in the mirror. He rose, brought his palm quickly to his brow as if to be sure it was no vision. And then reaching out his hand he seized a pistol and rushed towards the door.

"Better still," he cried, "she shall see me do it."

And before Ivie could move from her place he turned the door on its hinges, and revealed Raith Ellison to all appearance dead. Ivie uttered a great cry and rushed forward. The madman raised his pistol to Raith's breast, but, crouching low by the table, and resting an elbow on the edge, old Sue Fairfoul, the witchwife, poised his brother Tom's great Whig-hunting piece and pointed it at Stephen Houston.

"The silver bullet for the man that turned me out of hoose and hame—mine for thirty years!" she cried, and as she spoke she fired. The madman fell forward, his head striking the floor at Raith Ellison's feet, and with a wild eldritch cry Sue rushed down the dark stairs out at the door, and the dark of the night swallowed her up.

The two women were shaken. Instinctively they clung the one to the other, but, strangely enough, in that moment of terror, standing between the dead and the dying, it was Ivie regained her calm the more quickly. Rapidly she saw how Raith had been drawn into a trap, and with the sharp edge of her dagger she cut the ropes which bound him. The tall Countess received the young man in her arms and bore him to the table as if he had been an infant.

His clothes were cut to ribbons. Blood flowed from a slight wound in his hand, but otherwise he was unhurt. The man marksman had been as good as his word. According to promise he had outlined Raith's shape on the door in bullet-holes, but the finishing touch of the silver button through the heart had been directed elsewhere.

"He will come to," muttered My Lady, as Raith breathed with a heavy lift of the chest, half checked in the middle, "but the sooner we get all this sorted out, with the least talk about it, the better. Come your ways, lass, we will send My Lord. This is *his* work!"

But Ivie cried out in amazement.

"Leave him!" she cried, "when they might return. There may be more of them. That terrible woman might come back! Think how she mopped and mowed at us. I believe she is mad also!"

"Well," said My Lady, "then I see not what there is for it but to wait till breakfast time, when My Lord will get his letter. But then all the world will know, and your lad there stand in more danger from the law than he did a moment since from the bullets of poor Steevie's horse-pistols."

"Do you go, if you will, My Lady—I will stay and keep watch," said Ivie.

"Lass, I would go fast enough—but to leave you here, I dare not—with that dead man and your lad not come to himself! You would lose your wits!"

"I shall not be afraid," Ivie answered, "there are arms. I have a sword, and we have found Raith!"

So she waited, having, as usual, her way.

Meg of Rothesay was, as this history has said, without fear, but her nerves were certainly tried that night. She had to pass down the stairs by which Steevie's murderess had fled—the woman whom all the world took to be a witch. But the Countess marched bravely on, a pistol in hand, though, as she said after, she would not deny "hummerin' ower a prayer or twa that could do no harm—at ony rate!" But even this she ceased so soon as she found herself out on the open face of the moor.

Then Ivie by the light of the dying candles continued to stand between the dead and the living, between Stephen Houston and Raith Ellison, both of whom had loved her and told her so. Raith was breathing quietly now, but he had not yet opened his eyes. Ivie went to the door and closed it. The yawning black throat of the staircase annoyed her, but as she swung the door to she saw the great pulleys above and the shelf below on which the wolf-trap had been placed to snap, as Raith pushed against it. Then she came back and resumed her watch. Presently one of the candles guttered out, and the lightning came stronger, glittering on the clear steel of her sword.

Stephen Houston had never moved since he had fallen, but now, for the first time, a flood of terror came over Ivie.

"What if he did come alive?"

She turned and regarded the dark mass, the hands stretched out, one of them still holding the harmless pistol, which had gone off as he had fallen. The hand outstretched on the floor seemed to move and clutch.

"Raith—" she cried, suddenly, "Raith, wake—wake—I want you—I need you, Raith; I shall go mad else!"

* * * * * *

Raith Ellison was deep and far in the great blue ocean in which spirits swim when they are disengaged from the body to which for a time they adhere. Perhaps death is like that. At least it is the likest thing to death which it is permitted to the sons of men to experience and tell of afterwards. Raith flew or swam in this blue immeasurable coolness. He had only to incline his soul and lo! he described a great curve like a swooping swallow. Only he was not going anywhere. There was nowhere to go. He had no trammels of flesh, nor any earthly entanglement. He did not think. He was not Raith Ellison any more. He only existed, swam in the pale blue coolness, and was happy.

It was then that he heard the voice of Ivie—a bird voice, speaking clearly, but oh, from what an infinite distance! Then it was that he found out that his soul was flat like a kite (and perhaps like the stellar universe). For he had simply to incline it upwards and lo! he felt himself rising exhilaratingly through the blue stuff which was all about him. Faster and faster he went till there was a roaring in his ears. Sharp pains came here and there. His body, which he had quite left behind, anchored him down again. He opened his eyes, and there stood Ivie.

She was pale. She leaned one hand on his breast—his bare breast, and was feeling with timid fingers for the beating of his heart—and, could it be possible?—yes, there was a sword in her right hand.

Slowly it all came back to him—the dark house—the trap, the madman, the final agony. He lifted his head, prepared to find Stephen Houston smiling death from implacable lips, still at the table-end with his pistols. But the pistols had been cleared away into a corner. He lay on the table himself, and on the floor, near the door to which he had been fastened—lay a dull and formless Somewhat—the figure of a man fallen as men fall when they are stricken suddenly dead.

"He did not kill me, then?" he murmured as his first word. It did not seem in the least strange that Ivie should be with him. Of course she would be there. He had known it before he had opened his eyes—oh, ages and ages before! That was what had made his heart beat at the first, after it had stopped, and it was her voice that had turned the course of his soul earthward again out of the vast blue ocean of crystal in which he had been swimming.

Then Ivie put her head down close to his, and spoke.

"Raith, I knew that you would come here and try to find me, so I came to you. But keep still—do not try to move—all will be well. My Lady will be back presently with assistance."

"My Lady?" queried Raith, trying feebly to piece things together. He was still partially dreaming, and could feel the long pulsing sweep through that glorious cerulean, where one did not need to breathe, but only to exist.

"Yes," said Ivie, touching his hair, "do not trouble to think at all. It is My Lady the Countess of Liddesdale! She has gone for her husband!"

Raith instantly sat erect. His head swam as his feet touched the ground, and he tried to steady himself, rocking with his hand on the table.

"I must get away," he cried, "they would take me—and I might tell if—if they tortured me—I might tell where your father is—*my* father, Gil, and all the prisoners."

"Do not be afraid," whispered Ivie, "only wait. My Lord will ask you nothing that you may not safely tell him. Also he wishes to see my father—wishes it greatly. He has a mission for him. And for the others, he has promised My Lady——"

"What?"

"That they shall go free. Hush—here they come. If it be any others——" She did not continue the sentence, but thrusting a pistol into his hand, the two of them waited as the sounds beneath grew nearer.

"Ivie—Ivie—I am here—have I been long?"

It was the Countess, tall as any man and looking taller in her rough soldier's coat and huge plumed hat feathered like that of a life-guardsman.

"My husband?" she answered a look of Ivie's, "he is below with two or three men whom he can trust. But if this young man will go into another chamber and clothe himself in this suit which I brought for him, it will save much trouble. The matter will be less likely to be talked about. Then if he is able, he will ride home with us to Kingsberry, and tell us all about it to-morrow morning. It will do my husband, who is the greatest gossip in the world, much good to have to wait till then. He will make fifty 'supposings' when he finds that wolf-trap."

Raith clad himself with difficulty, stopping at every minute to lean against the cold wall of the little antechamber, through the open window of which the night air brought in the smell of burning torches.

Already they were carrying out Stephen Houston to his burial, while doubtless his disturbed spirit was planning its flight through some more remote region of the blue coolness, the confines of which Raith had that night touched.

In these wise days there are few who give even a thought to witchcraft. But it was the universal belief at the time of these chronicles, as it was that of the men who penned the Bible narratives. But certain it is that whether old Sue Fairfoul was a witch or not, she vanished utterly from the earth from that moment, though actively searched for throughout every shire in Scotland, as all may see who choose to consult the register of the Acts of Privy Council.

Ivie, in a happy triumph, brought the boy (*her boy!*) home to his mother. And Marjory Simpson clasped Raith in her arms and listened to the tale of the wondrous rescue and the flight, her pale face paling yet more as she heard how Raith had left them still at bay on the rocky ridges of Ben Aron. "The few against the many," as she said, "but the Lord is on their side."

"And we have a great advantage in position also," added Raith simply, and meaning no irreverence.

His mother looked at him a moment, and then said to Ivie, "You have a work of grace yet to do there. The old Adam is still strong in the boy."

"And this Eve stood most of to-night with a sword in her hand," said Ivie, "and oh, but she was frightened. I had to call out to you, Raith."

"I heard you and I came!" he answered. But neither he nor she knew from how far.

After a little while, Raith drew Euphrain aside into one of the window embrasures, and spoke in her ear. "I promised to give you a message," he said. "You will know what it means. I do not. Captain Grif Rysland bade me tell you that he kept troth!"

At which Euphrain flushed suddenly redder than the sunrise which was coming up over the tree tops to the east.

"I keep it too," she said, under her breath.

Then came My Lord in with My Lady, who looked not a whit the worse for her adventure.

"Sir," he said, "you have had such a night as few men live through. But for all that—taking my wife's word for it, I cannot call you other than a singularly fortunate young man!"

And so thought Raith himself, except only when he remembered Lag's leaguer of the Hill of Aron, and the comrades and friends who held the trenches and waited for him to return.

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

LONG-BODIED JOHN—MARTYR

"THE Hill of Bashan—an high hill," said Mr. Peden on the Sabbath morning as the garrison of Ben Aron drew together—all, that is, saving the necessary look-out men—for the exercise of worship which was never omitted in any circumstances. It was a week now since Raith had been ferried across the black water of Aron, and every man among them was visibly thinner, and there was a more anxious expression on the face of the commander-in-chief. But though the provisions ever dwindled and Raith delayed the signs of his coming, the worship of God must not be forgotten even for a day.

"The time of some of us upon the earth is not long—of whom I myself am one!" said Peden the Prophet, casting his hoary locks behind him like a fleece, "and this is my Mount Pisgah from which it is permitted to me to view the land. Even as Ritchie said at the Moss of Ayr, so say I now, 'God spare the green and take the ripe!' And indeed, as is ever the way when it comes to taking up of offensive arms, I see more of the green than the ripe among you. Nevertheless, I judge you not, God spare you all, sayeth Alexander Peden.

"But," he continued, "there is one that I remark not among you—even Peter Paton. What of him, who is wont to carry the bag? Is he also a Judas?"

"I have not seen my uncle since yestreen at the gloaming—but I'll warrant him he is no Judas!" said Long-bodied John stoutly.

"A bruised reed then, set in a soil of self and siller," commented Peden, "yet in his time permitted to be an instrument of the will of the Almighty."

Then he read to them one of the warrior psalms—the seventeenth by number:

"*Keep me as the apple of thine eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings, from the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies that compass me about!*"

And he bore on the same subject in his prayer, likening the Laird of Log to "a lion greedy for its prey, and, as it were, a young lion lurking in secret places!"

And from far off on the long peninsula of whin and peat on which the tents and shelters of Lag's force were set out like a child's toys, the smoke of the morning breakfast-fires gave meaning to the allegory. Day by day their assailants had grown more numerous, as Westerhall and Morton sent on their bands of Annandale and Nithsdale men, and more and more runagates filtered up from Lag's own Galloway country. On the very day of Raith's departure indeed, a large body had arrived with the three Houston brothers in command, glad to be quit of the house and lands, rather than live in fear of the increasing madness of their elder brother.

* * * * * *

"Soon, soon shall Alexander Peden pass away," cried the old preacher, "even now his place knoweth him not. Other times shall arrive—a younger day. Send, Lord, that it be a better. Yet let not the old day be quite forgot. Let not the man of the world, whose portion is in this life, guide wholly the kirk and folk of God. Teach us whom Thou lettest live, to walk modestly by the side of the great mystery. Soon, very soon, there shall be naught hid from Sandy Peden. But teach these poor ones here Thy secret, which is with them that fear Thee."

He ended an utterance less prophetic than usual by lifting up both hands in the Scottish attitude of benediction. Ere he had dropped them again there came from over the hill a sharp rattle of musketry, and Grif sprang for his sword and musket. Then ascending the hill he made the best speed that was possible to him, towards the defence of the threatened point.

"Lads, to your posts, every man of you," he cried back over his shoulders, "for ye may be attacked any moment. Where is John Paton?"

But John Paton of the Long Body was not to be found. He had vanished as soon as Peden had put the question concerning his uncle. There was a suspicion in his own heart. He had noticed for some days that there was something fermenting in the mind of Prayerful Peter, and he knew the signs of the uncle's temper better than any. Now he bitterly reproached himself.

"He is a sailor and a fisher," thought the nephew, as he ran low among the rocks, as if he had been stalking curlews on the shore in the spring frosts, "and that black water they make such a cry about, would be no more to him than it was to me. He has evaded, and been captured. No, he would not sell us for money. There is some principle in the man. Besides which all of his money is invested on this side of the dyke. But if he were tortured—as Lag knows how—ah, well then, Peter Paton might be brought to speak!"

Before Long-bodied John reached the narrow deep place which he had helped Raith to cross, and where the bank was hard on either side, he found a score of Lag's men already on the hither side. Having forced the passage they were busy drawing their fellows across with cart-ropes, and there were floats under the chin of each.

"My uncle's work—surely!" thought Long-bodied John. And, indeed, looking up, he spied at that moment Prayerful Peter, bound and guarded, while a pair of sentries were stimulating his invention with their bayonets. Peter was bleeding and crying out for pity, which however he did not find.

"Thank God for that," said his nephew; "at least he has not sold us for money!" And simply and without a moment's hesitation he set himself to do his duty—that is, to undo as far as he could the mischief caused to the defences of Ben Aron by the weakness of his kinsman.

He laid him down behind a rock, and began coolly to pick off those who were busiest in the work of ferrying over the soldiers. The leader, who had already crossed, one of the younger Houstons, Hurst indeed—instantly sent a dozen men to surround and capture him alive. But Long John Paton, twining his legs securely about a stone, continued his fusillade as fast as he could load and fire.

"I suppose, John," he said, addressing himself, "that it's doom's possible that ye are gaun to dee. Aweel, mony is the time ye hae been near it, John, but here it's come at last. Ye were never great at the kirk-wisdom, John. But ye hae had a great heap to do wi' kirk-folk and professors in their day. Ye hae saved them, and ta'en them bodily comfort, and carried their scribing, and hearkened to their lang prayers. And maybe, John, a' that will count! I dare say it will, John, for He's a just God—Yon Yin—so they say—just and mercifu' baith! Ye hae tried mony a time, John, to straight your uncle's crooked ways, and whiles ye hae dune it. Ye hae been a sinner I dare say, John, but what wi' bein' aye in the boat, ye hadna time for as muckle o' that as some ithers. But dootless ye wad hae dune it if ye could. But Him Up Yonder kens a' it, far better than you, John. So a' ye hae to do, is juist to blaff awa' at the vaigabonds as lang as your powder lasts! Ye are doin' your best, John, onyway, and the wee weak bits, He will maybe look them over, John—or He's no what they cry Him up to be. *I wad, gin I were Him!*"

Thus meditating Long-bodied John cracked away merrily at his post, and indeed much hampered and delayed the landing, laying low first one and then another of the Houston brothers as they attempted to win across that sullen water which sucked at its long swaying lily-stems, and he minded the bullets no more than if so many bairns had been skipping stones over its pools at him.

Suddenly John felt a sting behind his head. They were shooting down at him from the rocks above. His position was untenable by all rules of military science—only John of the Long Body knew nothing of military or any other science.

"It's near the end noo," he said to himself. "I wonder if ye can pray, John? Let's try! God be merciful to me—— Na, John, it winna do, ye canna get ayont that. It's curious too—for mony a braw squad o' prayers ye hae heard in your time! But it's as weel, maybe. Ye never could hae gotten yon lass oot o' your heart, ye ken that. And even noo, Guid forgie ye, it's her e'en and her bonny smile that ye see, when ye should be thinkin' o' your Maker! Wae's me, but ye did sore wrang, when ye never telled her a word o' her lad up in the auld cave aneath Tantallon. Oh, if ye could only hae gotten your heart under, John, a' this need never hae happened—and the lass stown awa' to be hidden nane kens where."

Then interrupting his firing, for he began to feel himself curiously light-headed, he wrote painfully in a little account-book his uncle had given him.

"*Bonny Mistress Ivie*," so the message ran, "*think whiles on John Paton o' Cantie Bay, that lo'ed ye, and aye did what he thocht ye wad like—except ance, and forgie him for that. He is by wi' it now. He will never see the Bass again nor your bonny face. Bid a guidnicht to a' kind frien's frae John Paton of Cantie Bay, fisherman.*"

* * * * * *

At the first glance, Grif Rysland could see that his long-impregnable position had been completely taken in the rear. In spite of Long-bodied John, whose single gun he could hear speaking from below at intervals, it was manifestly impossible to withstand those who were already landed on the hither shore of Aron. Behind him he could hear the full roar of battle break forth. A field cannon, constructed of leather bound with bands of iron, as the old soldier recognised by the sound, had been brought into action. This he knew would terrify the few raw defenders, more than anything. For like the Highlanders the Covenant men could not stand the deep roar of "the Musket's Mother."

What to do?

To flee was an impossibility. To go down and die with honest John Paton—good! But then who would make terms, if terms were to be made, with the enemy? Retreat was not practicable. The very Water of Aron, which had been the Wanderers' defence, now became their prison. And with Mr. Peden and blind William Ellison, the thing was not to be thought of.

Beneath him, Long-bodied John, at last recognising his wounds, and knowing that the end of the end had come, had dragged himself up till now he sat on a rock in plain sight, where he still continued loading and firing—just as many a Sunday afternoon with true fisher laziness he had sat on a boulder under Tantallon and practised upon the sea mews as they flitted by.

"Ye're no a dragoon, John," he communed with himself as he sat and loaded, while the bullets flew like hail, "but ye are dooms ill to kill. May be ye wull win through yet! Lord, that's anither ye hae gotten to your score—a big red man that fell like a gull that has had his head shot off! And you, John, sittin' here, composed as King Solomon, wi' a dozen bullets at the least intil ye!"

But with these words Long-bodied John's defence of the back door of Aron fortress was over. He slid away sideways, his head reposing on his musket, and over him stormed the attack towards the crest of the hill behind which the defenders were hopelessly firing their last shots.

* * * * * *

Thus was ended the famous Leaguer of Ben Aron, and as Prayerful Peter explained afterwards daily to the end of his long and laborious life, "It was the pilniewinks that did it—I could hae stood death—aye, even the spoilin' o' my goods, (and indeed there was ae wretch o' an Annandale thief that gat my watch, whilk I hae never recovered till this day) but when they put my thumbs in the screws—Poor Peter had juist to blab oot to them a' that he kenned, aye and mair—a deal mair! And when it came to the knockin' in o' the second wedge o' the boots—sirce me, Peter wad hae shown them the road he had come across that water, had a' that he possessed been lyin' in a heap on the far side!"

So that after all Long-bodied John had spoken a true word about his uncle's faithfulness—which doubtless was a comfort to that faithful heart.

"Moreover," said Peter, with considerable point, "let them that never had their feathers i' the gled's claws, their thumbs i' the denty thumbikins, their legs snugged in the bit boxie they cae the Boots, cast the first stane at Peter. What ken they what they micht hae dune?"

And of this mind was King William himself, when Principal Carstairs, who in his day had been tortured, tried the thumbikins on the King at his request, and the King vowed that for another turn he would have rendered up every secret he possessed, if it were to King Louis himself—or so at least the fact stands recorded of him.

But Lag had triumphed. Ben Aron was in his hands. William and Gil Ellison, young Grey, Steel of Lesmahago, the brave Simpson lads (whose father was good for a swinging fine)—all the escapes from the Bass, among them the great and famous Mr. Peden, and best of all Grif Rysland—all were prisoners. Sir Robert's only sorrow was that he had not been able to entrap Raith Ellison also, but of that he did not yet despair. He had spies on his track, and near the little farm on the hill, to which he had gone on the recommendation of the Chiel of Wamphray, there were liers-in-wait for the return of the pony and its borrower.

In the meantime Lag guarded the prisoners down the path, set them on his own beasts in no Samaritan spirit, tied their feet under the horses' belly, and set out for Morton Castle, where he would meet Colonel Douglas, his comrade in persecution and staunch ally. To him he would deliver Mr. Peden, who was the only man of such mark as to have a price set on his head. Him he must send to Edinburgh alive, both because Robert Grier of Lag was a careful man in the matter of money, and because he thought that My Lord of Liddesdale, the King's Secretary, was beginning to look somewhat askance upon him. The Prophet, then, it was unwise to shoot at the first dykeback, and what with the change of kings and the uncertain times, it might be well to have another to share with him the responsibility of the execution of the remaining prisoners. For to slay Grif Rysland and the Ellisons he was resolved. In addition to which, it was possible that by this time his scouts would have put their hands upon Raith Ellison.

So, having buried his dead, making as was his custom no lament for any, and indeed secretly glad that all the three Houstons had been killed, an event which left him the freer hand, and, besides, opened up vistas of extending his landed borders in default of heirs to the estate,—in such times one never knew what might not be turned to account!—so Lag marched away well content generally, his own dead being covered up, but leaving Long-bodied John and two of the Bass prisoners to feed the corbies of Ben Aron.

Likewise he released Prayerful Peter, keeping faith with him thus far, but ordering the dog to be kicked out of the camp—an order which was joyfully obeyed to the letter by the legionaries.

The rest took their road towards Morton, guarded by the rough and heavy-handed troopers.

The meditations of Grif Rysland were many and sad.

"Had I done this?" he kept torturing himself, "had I left undone that other? I was thinking of my own business—of my daughter—of Euphrain when I bade Raith depart. If he had been here, the passes and fords had been better guarded! Ben Aron would never have been taken."

And for the first time in this history there were tears in the eyes of Captain Grif Rysland, that soldier both fearless and in his calling reproachless.

Mr. Peden, perceiving this, laid his hand upon his shoulder—their horses for the moment being led close together, and in a loud voice he proclaimed his message.

"Fear not, Grif Rysland," he cried, "thou must be brought before Cæsar, and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee!"

CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

BIG DEIL AND LITTLE DEIL

Now Morton Castle stands on one of the pleasantest sites in Scotland, and though it be now but a ruin for the bat to flit through while the cue-owl mews fitfully without, yet it keeps still a quiet, calm, and even majestic beauty of its own.

But Morton Castle, on that morning when the prisoners came down upon it over the fells, showed gay and smiling—a cloud of tents cinctured it about, like butterflies that had alighted in a swarm. Behind and higher were grouped the wicker shelters of the troopers and camp-followers. For Colonel Douglas of Morton was a famous commander, of that sort which confined itself to hunting the hill-folk and dividing the spoils of those who remained at home.

Douglas of Morton had ridden out to meet his friend, and the two conversed blithely together. Such a haul had not been made since Pentland, as Lag repeated again and again—"not even Bothwell could equal it!"

But at the first word of shooting and a joint warrant, Morton started.

"Not so near the house," he said, "remember the ladies! I cannot have it! What are all those fine hills back there for, but to shoot Whig dogs upon? I would never have a day's peace again from my women-folk!"

"Henpecked?" inquired Lag with an evil grin.

"Chicken-pecked," said Morton, "I stand in fear of my daughters, who will not have the neighbours killed or even prisoned if they know of it. On the field I can do my part in the King's service with any man, but—I like a quiet life when I am at home!"

"Ha," said Lag, "I begin to think that my house of Rockall, with only Roddie, and none to say me nay, is better than any of your great folks' palaces like Kingsberry or Morton!"

"Oh," said Colonel Douglas, with a shrug of his shoulders, "it does not make any great difference. Westerhall over there obliges me, when I have the need of a little quiet Whig shooting."

"But now we cannot go all the way back to Westerha' with my crew," cried Lag, "they would mutiny. And besides, I cannot afford to risk having the prisoners taken out of my hands!"

"There are no men of this neighbourhood among them?" demanded Morton, lowering at his friend eye to eye—but suspiciously, as bad men do who are yet equal in their badness, and respect each other for the fact.

"On my word," said Lag, and seeing that the oath did not carry conviction, "they are all Western and South country men, except a Lothian lad or two, who helped in the affair of the Bass."

"There should be good money in some of these," said Morton, "I suppose you want me to look after Mr. Peden for you. Well, I will take the Bass men also to Edinburgh. You know that the Council has often wanted to have its knife in the backs of these canny Louduners! But if I do, it is halves, remember—or I will have nothing to do with your shooting."

"And if I say yes," said Lag, "what of your women-folk then?"

"Why, then," answered Morton, "bide a little here, and towards the darkening we will march the rascals over to a certain quiet place at the head of the Linn of Crichope. The tumble of the falls drowns any little noise, and the deeps of the Linn save any trouble of burying. In the meantime put your haul in the old girnel (granary) till we have need of them, and come, say your prayers and bend your stubborn knee to the ladies! There are not only my own trio, but another, who though she be the daughter of a rebel—egad, sir, would make a man of my temper swear the Solemn League for her sake! She is sure therefore to enkindle a gallant young buck like the Laird of Rockall and Lag!"

"The bonnier the deil—the waur the deil!" cried Sir Robert. "That at least has been my experience!"

"Well, come and see," said his host; "but first what say you to my dressing-room for the ordering of your attire? What, no? You have been on campaign, man, and are scarce fit for ladies' parlours!"

"Then," cried Lag, who had his virtues, "I will e'en stay where I am. If your women-folk are so nice they cannot suffer a soldier fresh from a hard fight—why, then let them dress and scent puppies for themselves, I will be no woman's lop-eared spaniel!"

With a smile Morton waived the point and the two men mounted together. For all his bluster, Lag was always uneasy with women, at least with those of his own rank.

"My Lady of Liddesdale," said Morton, bowing, "here is

Sir Robert Grier ridden over on the by-going to pay his respects. His men had reported that you were at Morton!"

"Sir Robert is well served by his scouts," said Lady Liddesdale, coldly. Robert of Rothesay's daughter had no liking for her blustering neighbour. It was on her tongue tip to ask him how his shoulder fared. But on second thoughts she resolved to manage her little surprise otherwise. In the corner of the room a quartette of girls were clustered together over a book.

"Here," she cried, "young ladies, come and let this mettle spark bend the knee to you. Charlotte, Frances, Jean, you cannot keep my guest all to yourselves! Sir Robert, let me show you the prettiest maid in Scotland and a soldier's daughter to boot, Mistress Ivie Rysland!"

"I think we have met before," said Sir Robert, bowing slightly, "pardon me my taking the lady's hand. My arm is still a little stiff. I had an accident which troubles me!"

And he contented himself with again bowing to Ivie.

"None so ill," said Lady Liddesdale to herself, "for a wild boar in the sulks! I had not thought Roaring Rob had as muckle in him! But at any rate I pricked him to the quick. And how goes your siege, Sir Robert? We heard of that. What, still no success? Well, it is not the first time that the dull fellows have had the best of it. But how long are we to be favoured with your company, Sir Robert?"

"I ride this afternoon," he answered, "I have important matters forward. This is but a passing visit—having heard" (here he stammered, being inexpert at such banalities) "that your Ladyship was in the neighbourhood!"

"It is a favour you do not often pay to Her Ladyship of Kingsberry, Sir Robert!" returned the dame, glowering down upon him from the height of six foot four inches—as he afterwards said—'like a hoolet on a perch.'

"And the wicked old jade was laughing at me too," he complained to Morton, when they went down-stairs.

"I am sorry you go so soon," continued Lady Liddesdale as Sir Robert was going off, "I fear you will just miss my husband. We are expecting him this evening with an escort!"

At the word Lag turned about.

"Ah," he broke in, "what might your Ladyship have said? An escort—Colonel Grahame, then? No, he is in the West—Captain Windram—perhaps?"

"I do not think Windram is the name. But it is an English captain—of that I am sure! Good-day to you, Sir Robert!"

"I thought I knew every man that could be mustered between Eden and Forth," he murmured to himself, "and I have drained My Lord's lands pretty dry. Where, then, can he have found this escort?"

He applied to Colonel Douglas, but from him could get no information. New troops were expected from Carlisle and doubtless the Secretary, who had all the strings in his hand, had drawn some of these Englishmen round by way of Kingsberry.

"That would never do for me!" said Lag anxiously, "perhaps we had better march the prisoners over and finish the job out of hand!"

Morton shook his head thoughtfully.

"We must wait for evening," he said. "I had a note from Kingsberry only this morning. My Lord Secretary will not arrive before midnight, and besides, we cannot move the prisoners—blind Ellison and all, without attracting attention. Why, Lady Liddesdale, to crown her folly, has actually brought his wife and daughter with her also!"

"Where?—Here? To Morton?" cried Lag, eagerly, "you jest!"

"Look if I do," said his friend. And there, walking very peacefully along the green path which wound up from the burn, were Euphrain Ellison and her mother Marjory.

"Meddling old hag," cried Lag under his breath, referring to My Lady Liddesdale, "why cannot she get a company of the grenadier guards, where she might at least do something for the service of the King, and, besides, stand a rare chance of a bullet? But, as it is, she goes about with the Secretary in full cry after her, and her fingers all itching to be meddling in every man's business!"

Morton nodded fullest acquiescence. Out of reach of his womenkind, he could be to the full as cruel, though not naturally so brutal, as his neighbour of Lag.

"Ah," said Sir Robert, after a pause, "I have an idea. I must see Roddie, and that immediately."

But he did not confide his idea to his friend and coadjutor, contenting himself with saying only, "I shall expect you this evening. Now I have all these fellows to look after, and more coming every hour!"

"Well," said Morton, "the cooks have been busy in the kitchens ever since we knew you were in the neighbourhood.

You can smell the good beef-broth from here. But you yourself will dine with us up-stairs at noon?"

"No," said Lag, "I thank you, Morton, but I have had enough of Duke Robert's daughter. I will mess with the men down in the meadow. How goes the rant? 'Better a dinner on the herb, than with a brawling woman in a wide house!' which is, being interpreted—better dine with Roddie on the grass, than sup kail with My Lady Liddesdale in Morton Castle."

His host laughed, and shrugged his shoulders again to show that it was all very well for his friend, but as for himself, there was no hope or help.

"But," said Morton, "I did not know that you could quote Scripture—we shall have you preaching on the heather yet!"

"Quote Scripture?" said Lag; "well you know the devil did in his time, and I suppose we his faithful servants may!"

"Speak for yourself, Lag," said Morton, shortly.

"I do," cried Lag, "I do. The rest of you are all half-and-halfs! Go back to my sweet Lady of Kingsberry and her pretty traitresses!"

"Ah, Robin," thought Morton, as he strode away, "then the tale is true after all. The Rysland wench must have pinched you right sharply, to bring that grimace on your face! All the same I shall be sorry for the lass, if her father is to be shot to-night. Yet, after all, it is none of my business."

And with a third shrug of the shoulders, this easy King's man sauntered towards the Castle of Morton.

* * * * * *

The business on which Lag wished to see his confidential man Roddie, was indeed of the most private and confidential sort. The idea had come to him when he had seen Euphrain and Marjory walking together under the walls of the castle.

And if any man could realise his idea, Roddie could. If successful, it would indeed be a crown to his work. And merely as an idea, it was worthy of the master whom he had owned a moment before. The devil himself could not have done better—or rather, worse!

CHAPTER FIFTY

MARJORY'S MOTHER-HEART

RODDIE, Lag's *alter ego*—which is to say inferior devil, had come like many of his race of a good house, and upon occasion he could conduct himself very much like a gentleman—even though many years of Sir Robert Grier's society had left him few other virtues.

It was, then, with a not ungraceful air of respect, that he saluted Euphrain and her mother as they returned from their walk by the waterside in the hollow.

"I am aware," he said, "that Mistress Ellison and her daughter have reason to think but ill of me for that which is past. But times are changed and changing yet faster, so I ask that you will hear me, for I am the bearer of a message from one who is dear to you!"

For a moment Marjory Simpson gazed at the man as if to read his thoughts. She had seen him watching them before. For, as she often said since her marriage, Mistress Marjory Ellison had to see for two. But it had not occurred to her that this was anything more than the surprise natural to such a man, upon seeing the wife of a rebel walking freely about Morton Castle. In reality Roddie was keenly on the watch to see that the two women did not wander too close to the ancient girnel of Morton, in which the prisoners were for the present interned.

The old woman bowed her head, and answered plainly and openly.

"Speak, then, if you have anything to say to Marjory Ellison or her daughter."

"I *have* something to say," continued Roddie, "and it concerns your son——"

"And from which son of mine do you hold your commission—you, Sir Robert Grier's serving man?" demanded Marjory.

"From your son Beattie!" said Roddie, with a cadence in his voice, which, though helped by his Highland accent, owed something also to his talent for acting.

Now Marjory had none of her husband's fierceness of abstract indignation. And now, though her head was calm and quiet, her heart was the stronger.

"My son is my son," she said, "even though, if all tales be true, he has gone in an ill way. But I have had one son returned to me—why not the other?"

Then it was that Roddie was almost diverted from his proper business. He thought that if he could do a little on his own account, his master could not fail to be pleased.

"Ah," he said, speaking gently, as he knew how upon occasion, "you mean Raith, who was in service with me in the Royal Dragoons? I knew him well!"

Marjory nodded, for her heart filled at the name of that prodigal so wondrously returned—though indeed she had never doubted it.

"So Raith has come back to you?" said Roddie, looking thoughtfully at the ground. Marjory was about to answer, and tell of her youngest son's kind reception at the hands of Lord and Lady Liddesdale. For mothers' hearts love such things, and the telling would have been sweet, especially in such a quarter. But Euphrain, always more suspicious, nudged her mother softly, and Marjory, looking up, caught the fencer's glitter in Roddie's eye for a moment lifted and then dropped.

"I mean," she said, "I have heard news of him!"

"And if you will accompany me this evening," said the man, hiding his sharp disappointment, "I promise you that you shall have news, good news, of your other son!"

"You mean that I shall see him?" she queried, now suspicious on her own account.

"I promise it! I swear it!" he cried, all the more eagerly that he found himself accidentally telling the truth; "I know that there is no reason why you should believe me, therefore I have brought a letter which may convince you. It is from your son Beattie, now in high favour with the Managers in Edinburgh, and able to do many things for his friends, if only they would trust him."

He had intended to tell her how Beattie was so useful to the more ardent spirits of the Council, and especially to the bench of Bishops, that it might not be a very long time before he was made a bishop himself—so greatly in need of able men were the prelates of Scotland at that time. But his Celtic finesse kept him silent.

"Let me see my son's letter," said Marjory, hastily, stretching out her hand.

At first Roddie pretended to hesitate, as if he were afraid of exceeding his instructions.

"The letter is to my master, Sir Robert," he said, "and for the most part treats of affairs of state, and the services which your son is rendering to the government. But there are certain portions which concern you, and—yes—you may read them. Only you will stop when I ask you, seeing that I have no right to show you the letter at all. But," he added softly, "I can feel for that which is in a mother's heart."

Again Marjory felt Euphrain's warning arm, but this time she was too eager at sight of Beattie's handwriting to give any heed.

"Show it me," she said, and, taking it, this is what she read.

"Also I pray you, Sir Robert, to remember, if in aught I have served you or the King's Majesty, that for a first reward I claim the lives and good treatment of my father—William Ellison sometime prisoner on the Bass, as well as of my brother Gil for whom I still have much affection, in spite of the ill words and worse slanders they have put upon me. And as for my lovit mother, if ever you meet with her or with my sister Euphrain, I beseech you take pity on them and give them good news of me. I trust that I may early see them, and that they may forgive and one day be thankful for all the steps I have taken to bring about the good of the country and the furtherance of good order!"

So far had she read, when Roddie, seeing her about to turn the page, and knowing that Master Beattie went on to say that as to his rebel and traitor brother Raith, Sir Robert might use his full discretion with him, informed Mistress Ellison gently that the rest of the letter concerned only the service of the King, and that her whole message lay there plain before her eyes. So, thanking him, she read it again, the flowing, easy-swelling words taking her by the heart, seeing that she was the lad's mother, and found it hard to believe any evil of him.

"Give my mother good news of me—I love them—I trust that I may see her and them!" she murmured, quoting only the sense. And straightway her heart took her back to the time when Beattie, a dimpling baby-thing, learned his first lessons, graving the great A's with his finger among the meal of the bake-board on the summer afternoons.

"I would like to see him!" she murmured; "my little Beattie! He was always so quick!"

Then again she saw him at play among the poppies at the corn-edges, the flowers a foot taller than his head. "Euphrain, I would like to see the boy, once before I die!"

"So you shall, madam," said Roddie. "I will convoy you myself. It is no far journey. You can ride if you will, but it is safer to walk. He is on the King's business, and his presence must not be known. I swear to you that if you trust me, you shall see your son this night!"

And indeed it was true enough, though the son she was to see was not he whom Marjory expected.

"And where?" she asked; "tell me the place."

"At the head of the Linn of Crichope," said the serving man; "do not be afraid. Colonel Douglas will be there. You shall see him ride off to the meeting with Sir Robert. We shall follow in their wake, but cautiously, lest you be turned back. Colonel Douglas would not allow that. But all the same, you cannot be afraid to go where he is."

"No," said Marjory, who was ever unready to think evil, "he seems an honourable man—for a persecutor."

"Ah," said Roddie, "there are better and worse amongst us lads that ride for the King. Have I, think you, done this for mine own advantage?"

"Why have you done it at all?" said Euphrain, suddenly, looking full at him.

Now if it had been her mother, he would have replied that it was because he understood her griefs of separation, her love and yearning. But he dared not answer Euphrain so. Her cool grey eyes outstared him.

"Because," he replied, "your brother has conquered in short space very great power. And when he arrives at that to which all men say he is tending, he will not forget poor Roddie—who has had enough of riding and slaying under a rough master!"

"Poor man!" said Marjory, "we will go with you, and bring our friend also!"

"Aye, do," said Roddie, "there may be news of her father also! I should not wonder!"

* * * * * *

CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

THE PLACE OF SLAUGHTER

Now the Linn of Crichope is surely one of the strangest places in Scotland—deep, narrow, cut out from the soft sandstone, turned as on a lathe, grooved into a myriad caves, arches, pot-holes. The sun never shines there. The waters tear and roar through it in time of flood. The winds, even when there is a profound stillness in the upper air, moan and cry down there like lost and prisoned souls. But for all these reasons, it was a great haunt of the Covenant folk, till it had been rendered too unsafe by the near garrisons at Morton and Drumlanrig.

But at the top, where the water of the Crichope burn comes down off the high tableland, there is a waterfall, and a pleasant green space too, in front of it, where lovers oft convene, and to which quiet villagers walk out to sit awhile on the grass, and listen to the roar of the waterfall above, and the unquiet wind in the caverns below.

But in the latter Covenant days there was no lonelier spot and no one more avoided by all the countryside. For there was ofttimes blood on the sward, and the place where the execution squads had stood is still pointed out. It was chosen so that the victims might fall back into the boiling torrent and give no further trouble. It is told how more than one, wounded, but not unto death, or perhaps intentionally spared by a more than usually merciful firing party, threw himself backward and took the scant chance of escaping a broken neck. Indeed, even far into the eighteenth century, there was an indweller at Penpont, an old man, a great Covenanter, who still crawled about with crab-like sidelong steps, from having, as he said, "loupit Crichope Linn wi' a dozen bullets after me."

To this place, then, the prisoners were conveyed, not all in a bunch, lest that should attract attention, but in twos and threes.

Marjory and Euphrain had gone into the Castle, where, though they did not, by their own wish, frequent the great chambers, but contented themselves with the little lodging allotted to them, they found easily enough a servant to seek for Ivie, and to bid her come to them. But no Ivie was to be found. The Countess herself had not seen her for hours. She had been observed, one of the Colonel's daughters reported, walking quickly away from the old girnel. Also there was a horse missing from the stable. She might have gone for a ride, having had to saddle for herself, since all the grooms were taking holiday in the camp of Lag's men—the drunken wretches. There would be no doing with them for a day or two after Sir Robert was gone! Certes, but they would lead their father a pretty life if he did not keep *his* troopers in better order. Sir Robert's rascals were a disgrace to the country! For them, give them the Life Guards in their gay coats and their lace—these were the fine soldiers, if you like. Though indeed those who had been in France did say that the troops of the Red House of the King were still finer. But then everything was richer and better in France!

So it came to pass, that Marjory and her daughter Euphrain were waiting for Roddie at the edge of the Bogwood according to their promise.

To see her boy! That was Marjory's dream. Who knew but that Beattie too, though now they called him traitor, spy, and worse names, might come back to her, even as Raith had done? There was no saying—*if once he saw his mother.*

Duly was Roddie in waiting. Before them, riding slowly, they could see Sir Robert and Colonel Douglas, going, as Roddie assured them, to an interview with Beattie and My Lord Bishop of Galloway. It was calm, assured weather, and they set out while it was yet broad daylight—indeed, little more than mid-afternoon.

The Linn of Crichope! Many were the legends and strange tales, told by the fireside at Mayfield, that the name called up—of wild deep caverns, of marvellous wildernesses of trees and ferns, of fathomless gulfs and roaring floods, of brownies, fairies, dancing elves, and above all, of the honest lads of the Covenant, who were used to lie up there so comfortably in the easy, early days before the coming of Clavers.

That was what Marjory thought of as Crichope, and perhaps Euphrain too—but what they did see was very different.

By the time they reached the head of the glen the sun was setting, and threw his beams level on a row of men who stood on the edge of a precipice, the green short grass under their feet, and the main abyss behind. A little to the side two men sat on horseback, calmly conferring together, as if the whole were a little matter of everyday business. They were Lag and Colonel Douglas. There seemed to be some difference of opinion between them.

"It must not be!" said one.

"It shall be!" cried the other.

"Then I will have nothing to do with it!" said Colonel Douglas; "it is murder—nothing less!"

"I have my commission—you, Colonel Douglas, yours! —They shall die, these men! If you do not wish to be present, you can put spurs to your beast like a faint heart!"

"I shall hereafter call you to account for that word!" said Morton.

"Pshaw," sneered Lag, "I have more duels on my hand than there are days in the year. But they never come off. Stay, man, and see justice prettily done. I will register your protest. Roddie, Kilburn, Begg, here! Ye are to bear witness that Colonel Douglas does not agree to the execution of these recusants, which is about to take place by my orders. Colonel Douglas had ever a soft side for the rebels. But then he has not had so much trouble upon Ben Aron as we, or perhaps he would not have brought them even so far!"

It was then that a woman's cry arose from a little group that had that moment appeared over the brae.

"It is my husband! What are they doing to him?"

For Marjory Simpson had seen William Ellison and rushed to him. The blind man held out his arms vaguely, recognising his wife's voice, but not knowing what had brought her there.

"Marjory—Marjory!" he cried, and then again, "Marjory!"

But without a word Euphrain had gone straight to Grif Rysland, where he stood, more firmly tied than the rest, his hands behind his back.

"I have not your token, Euphrain," he said, smiling a little; "they have stolen it. But I love you—I love you as I never thought to love woman."

Gil, who stood next, watched till either of the two women should notice him. And in his simple way he began to wonder why all his life long never a woman had thought of him *first*.

"And Gil, my son Gil!" cried his mother at last; "what is this? What is this?"

"We are to die, mother," said Gil. "You had better go away. It will do no good."

"I will beg at his feet for your life," cried Marjory, clasping her arms about her eldest son's neck. "I will cast myself on Lag's mercy——"

"Steady, mother," said Gil, "be brave. Do not let the wolf see that you give way. Keep the tear from your eye—the smile on your lips! He has brought you here for this—to triumph over you, to see your agony! I saw it—I knew it as soon as I saw you coming over the brae in the company of that vile fox Roddie. Disappoint him, mother. He has brought you here to batten on your distress, to have you kneel and implore—and then to spurn you! Mother—mother, be guided—do as I say."

Gil had never in his life made so long a speech before. It was his swan-song. And, so strange it was, in a moment Marjory was herself again. Euphrain also dropped her arms from Grif Rysland's shoulders.

"Where is Ivie?" asked her father; "why is she not with you?"

"She does not know," said Euphrain; "she had ridden out somewhere in the morning before they cheated my mother into coming here with a false letter and message."

Grif's lips were very firm, but otherwise his face showed no emotion when Euphrain bade him farewell.

"Stand away there, women—what brings you here?" shouted Lag, cantering forward, as if to drive them bodily over the precipice; "a little more and I would put a bullet in you also, as indeed you are well deserving of."

At the first sight of the Ellisons, Morton had turned his horse about and ridden away.

The preparations for immediate execution went forward, Lag directing. He put Marjory and Euphrain under the charge of Roddie and three other men, in a place within a few yards of the men about to die.

"Now in Edinburgh Grassmarket," he said brutally, "they would make you pay gowden guineas for as good a place, and I, at the Linn of Crichope, charge you nothing at all."

He even sacrificed some hope of ransom to the completeness of the final scene, by causing the Simpson lads to be brought forward with the others. "Your nephews, Mistress Ellison," he cried with a wave of his hand towards them, "quite a family party!"

The firing squad was chosen and set in position. There was the dry click of ramrods, and then a dull thudding as the charges were driven home.

"Make ready—take a pace nearer!" cried Lag; "no bungler's work—two bullets to every man, and do the job cleanly!"

He glanced along the line and then triumphantly over at the white set faces of the two women. Bitterly he regretted the absence of Ivie. The crown of his work had escaped him. The final order came at last.

"Present your arms!"

CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

JEZEBEL AND JEZEBEL'S CHILDREN

"STOP—in the King's name!" cried a voice from behind, "put down your weapons. Who shoots, dies!"

It was the Secretary of State himself, my Lord Liddesdale, and beside him, on the lost horse from the stable of Colonel Morton, was Ivie Rysland—while a little behind, his sword in his hand, rode Raith Ellison.

Warned in time, Ivie had ridden to intercept him, and he would have arrived long ago, but for the curious nature of My Lord's escort. This was not military, but naval. Indeed they were the seamen from the inspection ship *Swiftsure*, which had arrived off the coast, having in these leisurely days taken all that time to turn Cape Wrath. And in command there was no less a man than Captain George Teddiman himself.

The landfolk might ride, that is—My Lord of Liddesdale, Raith, and Ivie. But the sailors had to come on at the trot of their bare feet, except only their Captain—which, though they did most manfully, yet, the horsemanship of Captain George Teddiman not being of the first order, the party arrived in no more than the nick of time.

"Sir Robert," said Liddesdale, "pray show me your warrant for this execution!"

"I have, as you know, a general warrant," Lag answered sulkily, seeing his prey on the point of escaping him. "It would have been over but for the fruit of waiting for these women," he murmured.

"And you dare!" cried My Lord. "I shall report this to the Council. Do you know that by the authority of the King, His Majesty James the Second——"

"Whom God preserve!" said Captain George Teddiman, lifting his laced hat high in the air.

"Whom God preserve!" cried in chorus all his hundred and fifty seamen, pulling at their forelocks and rolling their tobacco quids.

"By the King's authority," the Secretary went on, "all particular warrants of every sort are rescinded, and all prisoners must be delivered up to be tried by the ordinary courts of the kingdom. By His Majesty's order in Council, rebellion does not exist in any part of his dominions, and furthermore, liberty of conscience and worship has been granted to all!"

"Ah," said Lag, ironically, "I did not know there were no more rebels. I thought that I had been busy fighting a good many on Ben Aron. So the news did not reach me. But after all, seeing that I have full military authority over this district, and that you, My Lord (with all deference) have only civil—I shall proceed to do my duty in terms of my commission, and execute these rebels taken with arms in their hands."

"I dare you on your life," said My Lord, taking his place with Raith between the firing party and the prisoners, who, being bound, still remained in their positions. But Ivie had her arms about her father, while Euphrain watched her with jealous eyes.

"Stand away," shouted Lag; "I will take the responsibility. Men, prepare to fire, and if any interfere, their blood be on their own heads!"

"Captain George," cried My Lord, "oblige me by advancing your men!"

"Catch a hold of the swabs and heave them overboard!" shouted the burly sea captain, showing a good example. For, seizing Lag about the waist, he rushed with him towards the cliff. The hundred and fifty seamen broke into a true salt-water cheer, and each seized his man as far as they could make them go round. Those left out helped their nearest comrades. Lag tried in vain to reach his pistols, but Captain Teddiman had him too tightly. In a trice there would have been a strange turning of the tables, for the sailors were far more numerous than the troopers Lag had brought with him. All of them would have been over the precipice, had not My Lord, with difficulty restraining his laughter, made a sign with his hand for them to stop.

"Say but the word, My Lord," said Captain George Teddiman, hopefully, "and overboard it is!"

And indeed the steep sides of Crichope would have settled a good many scores, had not Lord Liddesdale found his voice.

"Let them go," he cried; "but stay, keep Sir Robert a moment under guard. I have a word to say in his ear. And do you, Captain George, take the men yonder and untie them. They are the objects of the King's special clemency—save, indeed, those who are specially named in the schedule of exceptions."

The Secretary spoke awhile softly to Sir Robert Grier, who, after listening, made no further objections to rendering up his prisoners, and sulkily proceeded to withdraw his men.

"You have rested long enough, Sir Robert," counselled Lord Liddesdale, "you had better march to-night for Sanquhar. There may be more need for you in the west."

"Ah," said Lag, "I presume there will, so soon as the King finds out that proclamations do not put down rebellion so well as old-fashioned powder and shot!"

And with that he mounted his horse and rode away.

The prisoners were left with My Lord—the sailors also.

"Men," said My Lord, addressing the seamen, "I presume that you could not, on oath, recognise any of these late prisoners?"

"*Swiftsures*, turn your backs!" commanded Captain George.

The whole crew faced about instantly as one man.

"Swear that you could not tell one of them, not if they were your own brothers!" cried Captain George.

"We swear!" cried all the crew in chorus.

"You never remarked whether they were old or young, naked or clothed, black or white. In fact, you would swear on the Book that you know nothing about the matter!"

"We swear!" cried the *Swiftsures*, manfully.

"Good lads," said Captain George Teddiman; "that is Mr. Pepys's way! He is the king of all seafaring men, though he is always sick aboard. But, Lord, he knows more than fifty admirals, as I think I have mentioned already to your Grace to-day!"

"Certainly," said the peer, "a hundred times at least—I must make this Mr. Pepys's acquaintance when next I go to London."

"A fine man," said Captain George; "keeps a coach, and learned—all the Bishops cannot pose him. Anything more I can do for you, My Lord?"

"Only keep your men as they are for a moment," said Lord Liddesdale.

"*Swiftsures*, shut your eyes!" commanded their captain; "fifty lashes to the man that opens them till I tell him—Mr. Pepys's way—plain and simple, easily understood—no mistakes!"

"Gentlemen," said My Lord, addressing the released prisoners, but also abstaining from looking at them, "I do not know you. It is better that I should not know you, either names or faces. Pass on your way. If ye cannot serve the King, at least lead a quiet life, until the better days come. If any of you be Mr. Peden, or Mr. Renwick, or Mr. Shields, or any against whom there are special exceptions—remember, I have no knowledge of the fact. Go—you will not be molested. But there is one Captain Grif Rysland, who, on condition of special service, has received a pardon under the Privy Seal, and to him I would desire to speak. Gentlemen, I bid you all a good-evening!"

And My Lord Liddesdale, Secretary for Scotland, stood with his hat off while the prisoners went by, each one saluting as he went, and Gil leading his blind father by the arm. Not a word of thanks was said, and My Lord Secretary's eyes were fixed steadfastly on the ground.

After all had passed out of sight, it was Captain George Teddiman who broke the silence.

"It could not hae been better done by Mr. Pepys himself! *Swiftsures*, you may open your eyes, and prepare to come about!"

* * * * * *

The result of My Lord's lengthy confabulation with Grif Rysland was that Grif went immediately to Holland with letters to the Prince of Orange, on the part of My Lord Liddesdale and a large portion of the nobility of Scotland. It was a very private mission, so private indeed that Grif did not return to Britain till he came back with the Prince and landed at Torbay. But then it was Colonel Grif Rysland who stepped on shore, and—had a wife with him.

And that wife was no other than Euphrain Ellison. For Euphrain had an unforeseen objection to the marriage when first approached.

"My brother Raith is to marry your daughter," she said, "that will have a strange look. For in a way I shall be Ivie's mother, and my own brother's mother-in-law."

It was certainly a little perplexing, but the old soldier cunningly turned the tables upon her.

"Let us get married at once," he said, "then it will be as if we knew nothing of any Raith-and-Ivie marriage. If they do not like you for a mother or a step-mother, they need not get married! The responsibility is with them!"

But apparently they did. For when, soon after, Raith also went to Holland to be an officer of the Prince, and as at the same time Ivie must rejoin her father, it was obviously impossible that he could make the long journey alone with so beauteous a young *vrouw*—she arranged matters by going as his wife.

As for Long-bodied John, he did not die, but lived with half-a-pig of lead in him (as he said) to heir his uncle's properties. It was Prayerful Peter, indeed, who to some extent saved his reputation by bringing him home, lamenting all the way, "My braw neffy, my braw neffy, to think it should come to this, the bonny lang body o' him strung atween twa cuddies!"

And Captain George Teddiman, having inherited Houston after all, promptly sold it to My Lord, because My Lady could not bear to think of such a horrid place being within sight of Kingsberry. So the ancient house of wickedness was razed to the ground, the trees were cut down, and the ewes turned into the valley to purify its terraces with the bleating of centuries of lambs.

Mayfield is a happier Mayfield now, and though Beattie never was made a Bishop, he accompanied the exiled court abroad, and became a great man as a diplomatic secretary at St. Germain, where there was a dearth of people who could spell, especially among the newer titles which the King scattered so prodigally.

But Gil was with his mother, and always when the summer came round there was an inroad of heartsome little folk, eager to hear from a blind old man who had sweetened wonderfully with love and time, certain strange stories of the past.

And the end always was, as he laid a hand on each head in turn, "Ye have a good lad for a father, bairns. But I will tell you one thing—ye have a woman that is an angel for a mother. For once, I, William Ellison, had a prodigal son and a hard heart. And a woman both gave me back my son, and softened my heart—my old, wicked, unforgiving, stony heart. And it was your mother, Ivie Ellison, who did that!"

Then the infant choir made answer as with one voice, "Of course mother would. She makes us good too. For father, when he comes in lets us play with his sword, or anything. But mother, when we'se naughty, and hard, and stony—she just whips us, and then after that she loves us!"

But old William Ellison, crooning on in his corner, and Marjory his wife, sitting by his side and holding his hand, repeated over to each other softly, like the question and answer of cooing turtle-doves, "There is no one like Ivie—no one like our daughter Ivie Ellison!"

And neither one nor the other of them ever remembers that once on a time they cursed her and called her Jezebel.

THE END

RICHARD CLAY & SONS, LIMITED,
BREAD STREET HILL, E.C., AND
BUNGAY, SUFFOLK.

Robarts Library
DUE DATE:
~~Jan~~. 25, 1995
Feb. 25/95

Fines 50¢ per day

For Touch Tone
telephone renewals
call 971-2400
Hours:
Mon. to Fri. 8:30 am to midnight
Saturday 9 am to 10 pm
Sunday 1 pm to 10 pm

KET
Y

PR
4518
C3C5

Crockett, Samuel Rutherford
The cherry ribband